



Book Review of Wilhelmsen,
Terese, Berg, Ellen, Evensen,
Kristin V., Solstad, Gerd Marie, and
Thorjussen, Ingfrid M. (eds.) 2023.
*Bevegelsesfellesskap i oppveksten:
Kritiske perspektiver på inkludering
og mangfold [Movement
Communities in Childhood: Critical
Perspectives on Inclusion and
Diversity]*. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget

BOOK REVIEW

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Through 19 chapters written by 23 authors from various approaches to social sciences, fields, traditions and disciplines, the book contributes with insights on inclusion and diversity within, and not least *across*, organised venues for physical activity in upbringing and adolescence. More or less explicitly dealing with inclusion/exclusion, the volume addresses issues such as kindergarten, school and organised (club) sport, illuminated by critical theory: Who loses and who wins from the structure and organisation of physical activity, and what are the alternatives?

The point of departure is the recognition and viewpoint that despite levelled playing fields being idealised in these arenas, they seem to reproduce or even reinforce inequality and marginalisation through their structural features, institutional logics and social-cultural practices. This ‘social fact’ of somewhat contra-productive organisations is established in a wide array of literature, so there is no need to contest such a standpoint. However, more weight should perhaps be put on presenting some of this research, revealing the legitimacy of the very basis for the book (gap-spotting and gap-filling: what we know, what is scarcely covered and how the anthology contributes). That said, I follow the argument regarding the uniqueness of the book, namely an interdisciplinary approach to an interdisciplinary problem.

As I see it, three fundamental questions seem to be present throughout the volume: (1) How inclusion/exclusion unfolds in the various contexts of physical activity and how, for instance, shades of marginalisation are understood by youngsters themselves and adult practitioners within the distinctive venues (teachers and coaches); (2) What do the organisational contexts have in common and what divides them in terms of inclusion/exclusion and the way in which these processes play out?; and (3) What is to be done: To what extent may the kindergarten, school and organised sport have common solutions for inclusive practices, and how might the non-levelled playing fields be tackled in a *generic* way? That is, how can inclusion as a practical concept make up an empirical-theoretical toolbox in the years to come, either for practical interventions or ways of thinking about inclusion?

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As a social constructivist, I would like to stress that where I stand depends on where I sit: My reading is coloured by my stand as a (sport) sociologist. Consequently, my interpretation is done through sociological lenses, highlighting sport.

The range of empirical contexts in the various chapters contributes in making this book interesting and important, but such an approach also comes with problems. For example, a broad contextual approach to the topic of inclusion/exclusion should perhaps imply a broad conceptual understanding of inclusion/exclusion. Such an approach would also benefit from an explicit link of inclusion/exclusion to that of equality/inequality. Somewhat disappointingly, this distinction is not addressed. A general distinction between these concepts may be that *social exclusion* is normally understood as being prevented from doing something one otherwise would have done (Levitas et al. 2007), while *social inequality* involves the systematic uneven distribution of social goods and burdens, such as sport participation (Grusky 2019).

Simplified, exclusion addresses *access and marginalisation* (how some groups are less facilitated), while inequality addresses *participation patterns according to the social background* (who does what?). So, there is a link: Inequality has inclusion/exclusion as both a starting point (distinctive access and marginalisation processes make up structures of inequality) and a consequence (social stratification makes up an access-gap, e.g., for sport participation). As these concepts are intertwined, they need to be discussed in relation to each other, or at least their interconnections should be clarified.

The editors touch upon this topic (p. 15) as they ask whether inclusion in a public sphere like kindergarten or school can be compared to inclusion in a voluntary, leisure activity like sport. They also, cleverly, remind the reader that non-participation in sport is not necessarily an expression of exclusion or barriers; it might be *self-exclusion* where dropout is something *chosen* rather than forced, or due to other priorities such as youth opting out of sport rather than sport organisations excluding them. However, this is sparsely discussed.

Larneby, inspired by Engström (2010), unpacks a way of thinking with institutional logics to analyse gendering in sport and sport schools and how these conflicting logics (the learning logic in school and the competitive one in sport) come into play. As a result, a competitive logic may be transferred into the field of educational practices, having exclusionary outcomes. The same way of thinking (parallel logics) is partly seen by Tangeraas and Mehus (Chapter 5), addressing how those who participate in club sports may be more motivated for physical education.

The most striking, innovative, and conceptual contribution is Sandvik and Solstad (Chapter 9), reflecting on inclusion in an escalating sport sphere characterised by higher demands in every way, following the competitive logic (*citius, altius, fortius*, the quest for more participants, more resources, more money, more dedication to making records, more instrumental talent development, more time investment from everybody involved, etc.). An escalated sport paradoxically leads to a narrowed resonance for more people, where sport participation demands *too* much. This lens is implicitly evident also in other chapters (e.g., Chapter 12, by Espedalen and Strandbu), stating that if the expectations and ideals of parental involvement and voluntary efforts in sport become too demanding, it has substantial exclusionary outcomes.

Leaning on Hartmut Rosa's (2019) notion of *acceleration* and *resonance*, an orientation towards a *talking sport* is pointed out (Sandvik and Solstad, Chapter 9). Rather than

sport for all, referring to equal access to sport, there is a need for more *relational* understandings of inclusion, structured by certain *qualities* (being seen, feeling safe, joy, etc.). The problem of participation/non-participation as an indicator of inclusion/exclusion is also evident in Chapter 11, where Nesse illustrates the fleeting nature of the sport community: A feeling of being a teammate is not necessarily dependent upon everyone giving the same meaning to sport, while at the same time, sport communities can rupture when, for example, football clubs' assimilating approaches and perceptions of what sport should be are made explicit (migrants being told, 'You have to play like us').

A shift from an escalating to a resonating sport is launched (Sandvik and Solstad, Chapter 9). This goes to the core of the dropout phenomenon in youth sport, addressing the importance of understanding the institutional logic of sport and its cultural conditions in order to identify inclusionary and exclusionary practices reproduced within the system itself. A shift towards youth sport being tackled precisely as youth sport, rather than adult/elite sport (from playing to *become* a football player, to playing because *one likes* football) is suggested. As an escalating sport stands in contrast to sport for all, inclusionary perspectives must accommodate *tolerance limits*. The chapter is an excellent source of inspiration for thinking along such lines.

From a sociological standpoint, I appreciate the ambition of the book. The broad focus makes it difficult to bring all chapters together as one volume, but together they contribute to comprehensive, nuanced insights and perhaps new ways of approaching inclusion, at least intellectually, in different, but equally related, fields. Especially, Chapters 8 and 9 constitute conceptually interesting springboards, prisms for interpretations, understandings and further work. These chapters, and partly the book as a whole, might be taken as *ways of thinking* (generalised thinking, conceptual light-shedding) when it comes to inclusion in key venues for youth's physical activity and quality of life, representing a shift from empirical insights to *understandings*.

At the intersection of sport and migration, two chapters should be noted. In many countries, sport clubs are highlighted as crucial for promoting integration in civil society. However, the voice of a specific group seems unrepresented in this debate, namely that of unaccompanied minor refugees. Nesse (Chapter 11) describes how refugees experience the social community of sport clubs as exclusionary in terms of their limited cultural competence knowing how to behave socially. Espedalen and Strandbu (Chapter 12) address a linked topic, finding that minority parents face cultural barriers when it comes to engagement in voluntary work in the sport club, as some of them struggle to understand the social norms and role of voluntary work within the Norwegian sport model. These chapters reveal the importance of a *social* approach to inclusion, accounting for the ways in which belonging and social identity form the feeling of being included/excluded.

If the book is read with an expectation of concrete, practical implications for practitioners and stakeholders, such as teachers, coaches, leaders and/or politicians, it will disappoint you, as complex questions are often followed by complex answers. But, if it is read as a contribution to inspire further research and insights, the book is particularly fruitful. It stimulates curiosity and potential for this important and constantly recurring theme of our time, reminding us that interdisciplinary problems should be tackled by interdisciplinary solutions.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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