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# **SPACE, EDUCATION, AND INCLUSION**

**INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES**

Edited by

Georg Ribler, Andreas Köpfer and Tobias Buchner



# Space, Education, and Inclusion

This timely, edited volume brings together interdisciplinary perspectives on space and spatiality in inclusive education discourses.

With research from an international range of scholars, the book explores the intersections, boundaries, and intermediary spaces of inclusion and exclusion within educational contexts. It advances thinking in inclusive education research and links discourses of the spatial turn in inclusive education with a call for thinking spatially. Instead of defining one spatial approach as the overarching framework for analysis, it considers the potential of combining spatial approaches from diverse disciplines, including social sciences, educational science, and geography. The book systematically identifies and links the relations between a diversity of spatial theoretical perspectives and phenomena of inclusion/exclusion.

This volume provides invaluable, transdisciplinary readings and reflections on space and spatiality in inclusive education, and will be highly relevant for academics, researchers, and postgraduate students in the fields of inclusive education, educational theory, and the sociology of education.

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Interdisciplinary Approaches

Edited by Georg Rißler, Andreas Köpfer  
and Tobias Buchner

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# 1 Space, education, and inclusion

## An introduction to the volume

*Georg Rißler, Andreas Köpfer, and Tobias Buchner*

Within social sciences, the connections between space and the social have become a popular focus over the last decades. Indeed, the so-called “spatial turn” finds its expression in numerous scientific works on the construction and role of space in various social contexts (Hubbard & Kitchin, 2011). Rejecting what has been considered an absolutistic understanding of space (Löw, 2001), various scholars from different disciplines have analyzed the spatial entanglements of materiality and sociality. Thus, the (social) production of space (Lefebvre, 1991 [1974]) has become a key issue, or rather, space has become a key category within the social sciences and in cultural studies (Jameson, 1991). This type of critical thinking about – and involving – space has been developed to study and highlight the spatial (re-)production of social inequalities and differences in particular (e.g., Harvey, 2001; Massey, 2005; Soja, 1985). Moreover, various theoretical approaches of space have been employed to explore phenomena of in- and exclusion, for example, in relation to class formation (e.g., Thrift & Williams, 2014).

Compared to the numerous and detailed studies on the interplay of space and in-/exclusion in other disciplines, educational organizations have been giving less attention to the spatial aspects of inclusion and exclusion processes (e.g., Holloway, 2010) – especially when it comes to research on inclusive education (Buchner & Köpfer, 2022a). This is surprising for several reasons.

Firstly, it is because pamphlets on inclusive education are packed with spatial metaphors. For example, teachers are advised to create inclusive learning environments, reduce barriers to learning, etc. – these are metaphors that point to a social understanding of space and education, or rather, to opportunities for creating inclusive spaces in schools.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, inclusive education claims that all children should learn together in the same place, regardless of their age, ability, first language, socioeconomic background, and so on. This seems to indicate that space has a specific importance in inclusive education. Thirdly, and in relation to the former point, inclusive education seeks to battle exclusion, which includes the battle against segregated learning environments. However, even though these spatial implications of inclusive education might point to the potential of a fruitful liaison between the concepts of space and inclusion in education, we would argue that inclusive education research has not yet

sufficiently addressed the aspect of space. On the contrary: inclusive education research has been addressing space at a rather simple level. For example, placements of students labeled as having special educational needs (SEN) in mainstream schools have been measured based on the amount of time they spend with their peers in the classroom (Buchner & Köpfer, 2022b). Even though this strand of research has created a benchmark for the progress made implementing inclusive education (Buchner et al., 2021), we would argue that this research points to a rather essentialized understanding of space, where classrooms and schools are thought of as containers, rather than as a number of social, fluid micro-spaces that interlink with broader societal spaces. As the last sentence suggests, we think that space theory has much more to offer for researching the complexities of in- and exclusion in educational settings. Over the last few years, several scholars have pointed to this potential (e.g., Annamma, 2018; Hemingway & Armstrong, 2012; Youdell & Armstrong, 2011), and this has led to a call for a “spatial turn in inclusive education” (Waitoller & Annamma, 2017) – which has hitherto not had a strong influence on the field.

Nonetheless, some research has demonstrated the potential of space theory to shed light on the intricacies of in- and exclusion processes in institutionalized educational settings. For example, following what has been described as a relational understanding of space, a line of research has started to reconstruct the complex relationships between the materiality of places, social practices, and subjectivities in schools – excavating spatialized regimes of belonging and segregation (e.g., Holt, 2007; Köpfer, 2022; Pluquailec, 2018). Similarly, other scholars investigated excluding practices in ostensibly inclusive settings, in relation to disability (Buchner, 2021; Demo et al., 2021). Moving beyond school gates, some studies have addressed the relationships between schools and neighboring, interlinked spaces, analyzing the spatialized intersections of various categories of difference (Annamma, 2018; Bischoff & Tach, 2018; Waitoller, 2020).

Nonetheless, evidence from other fields shows that these terrains of research into the relationship between space on the one hand and inclusion or exclusion on the other hand in educational settings are rather scattered and fragmented. They are found within different disciplines across the globe, follow different regional empirical traditions, and apply different space theories (Buchner & Köpfer, 2022a). That being said, we do consider these endeavors as the start of a spatial turn in inclusive education research. In order to stimulate and strengthen the movement toward a spatial turn, this volume brings together diverse (sub)disciplines from the fields of education, such as philosophy, geography, disability studies, and educational science. Furthermore, we invited researchers from different parts of the world, in order to make this volume an international contribution to the relationship between space and inclusion/exclusion processes. This book also intends to illustrate the diversity and productivity of different theoretical approaches to the concept of space. This compilation of chapters, therefore, applies different theoretical approaches to space – and illustrates impressively how space theory can contribute to different research objects and approaches in education, ranging from policy analysis to theoretical contributions.

For the reasons mentioned to this point, this volume provides a wide range of perspectives and research topics on space and inclusive education, covering numerous theoretical and methodological approaches within the field of education science to address the relationship between space/spatiality and inclusion/exclusion. As editors, we are delighted to have been able to gather such brilliant authors and contributions from different parts of the world, contributing to this endeavor.

In their contribution “Exploring Dimensions of Access Within Restrictive Spaces of Schooling” (Chapter 2), Katie Scott Newhouse and Srikala Naraian examine the programmatic discourse around inclusive education and ask how measures of support and facilitation can be thought of as spatial. Combining perspectives from critical space theory and disability studies in education, the authors explore the production of space through restrictive educational programs. Newhouse and Naraian refer to data from an ethnographic study, giving a voice to children who describe their experiences of receiving services in restrictive educational settings. The authors use impressive examples to illustrate how students strive for access, collaborative learning, and the same experiences as their peers.

The academic debate is dominated by Western concepts of space and inclusive education. This is why Amani Karisa, Benedict Khumalo, Joachim Nyoni, Kofi Nseibo, and Judith McKenzie critically examine the development of inclusive education in Africa from a spatial perspective with Chapter 3, “From Excluding Schools to Excluding Spaces: Spatial and Postcolonial Reflections on Inclusive Education in Africa”. The authors combine insights from disability studies in Africa with Soja’s thoughts on space, putting into question a binary understanding of inclusion and exclusion in education. In their conclusion, the authors suggest that inclusive education should be understood as a third space. Rejecting Western hegemonic ideas of inclusive education, this third space generates zones of creativity, exploration, and contest based on indigenous knowledge systems that can support the education of children with disabilities.

Next, Tobias Buchner and Flora Petrik in Chapter 4 examine the use of space theory for critically interrogating education policies. Combining a relational understanding of space with an ableism-critical perspective, they investigate the implementation of the New Middle School policy in Austria, a reform that intended to make schools more inclusive. Buchner and Petrik reconstruct the interplay of space and ability in a seemingly “inclusive class” at a New Middle School in Vienna. With their ethnographic case study, the authors show that teaching, taking place under the “surface” of a New Middle School, is fundamentally determined by ability-based hierarchies. Interestingly, this ability-space-regime is not structured by flexible and open teaching practices (as intended by the policy), but refers to ability expectations governed by pre-reform curricula. This highlights the fact that the ableist pillars of the meritocratic Austrian education system persist.

This contribution is followed by Melanie Nind’s “Inclusive Research, In-/Exclusion and Ethics: After the Spatial Turn(s)” (Chapter 5). This text offers the first-ever analysis of the connection between inclusive research and space.

Nind refers to relational theories of space, which see space as a product of social relations and material social practices, as well as to the postcolonial concept of the third space, through which she reaches the discourse of belonging. She takes research as the specific object of inquiry for her hermeneutic analysis, reflecting that inclusive research ultimately requires a heightened sensitivity to the spaces in which this collaborative research process takes place. Nind concludes that inclusive research in the sense of a third space of negotiation also requires spatial contextualization, and that new “intersubjective” spaces can be created through inclusive research.

In Chapter 6, Georg Rißler, Jürgen Budde, and Theodore Schatzki survey a practice-theoretical approach to “Inclusion, Exclusion and the Spaces of Practices”. They aim to show that attending to the spatial and placial features of practice-arrangement bundles can advance educational research on inclusion and exclusion. To support this thesis, the contribution explores three prominent treatments of space and place in practice-theoretical literature. According to the account of practices by one of the co-authors, in- and exclusion are tied to the continuation of practices, which it treats as a happening that occurs in sites. The authors argue that the notion of practice-arrangement bundles as the site(s) of the social means that in order to understand educational practices, both practices and material objects must be observed. They write that this equally applies to the inclusion/exclusion instantiated and effected by practice spaces and places: physical spaces, activity spatialities, and encompassing places. Using empirical examples from two ethnographic research projects, the authors go on to measure and illustrate the potential of a practice theoretical perspective to inclusion, exclusion, and the spaces of practices.

Federico R. Waitoller’s Chapter 7 also looks at space and education policies – from a different, but nonetheless remarkable, vantage point. Waitoller explores the impact of market-driven education policies, focusing on parents’ choice of school. As the author shows, research is unable to fully explain parental decision-making in relation to these policies. In his chapter, Waitoller introduces the model of marketSpace in order to generate a more profound understanding of the interrelation between market-driven policies and choice of school. Building on Soja’s spatial theory, Waitoller bases his analysis on the assumption that school choice is not a personal, or even rational act, but a spatial phenomenon that relates to broader social structures. Consequently, the education marketSpace needs to be understood as a dialectical unit that encompasses policies, practices, and discourses, and that is fraught with the intersection of classism, ableism, and racism which contribute to the formation of urban and educational spaces on the one hand, and students’, parents’, and teachers’ experiences on the other hand. These experiences form perceptions and emotions and have an effect on their choice of school and social struggles. The authors presents sequences taken from a qualitative study of school choice to illustrate how the education marketSpace produces inclusion and exclusion in urban regions.

In Chapter 8, Andreas Köpfer expands on Siegfried Kracauer’s contributions to the theory of space. Kracauer was a member of the so-called Frankfurt

School of critical theory, which is rarely mentioned within international discourse. Köpfer starts with a biographical introduction to Kracauer's work and then draws on his concepts for analyzing social norms and marginalization, such as the distinction between a represented and presented surface structure of social action – and the social reality located backstage. According to Kracauer, the background of social action is not directly accessible and requires microanalyses of precisely those phenomena that are found in everyday life, and that are rarely brought into view. Köpfer presents Kracauer's methodological contributions to researching spaces, such as the analysis of artifacts and mass ornaments. A rudimentary analysis of differentiation and retreat spaces in inclusive schools exemplifies Kracauer's ideas. Transferring these thoughts to the field of inclusive education, the chapter points out the benefits of applying Kracauer's concepts to inclusion and exclusion in educational organizations.

In Chapter 9, "Digital Learning: Navigating Inclusive/Exclusive Spaces Through Open Educational Practice", Michelle Harrison explores open digital approaches to education. Taking the COVID pandemic as an example, Harrison discusses the extent to which digitalization opens up a potential for inclusion, or potentially reinforces the so-called digital divide. The author's analysis of open approaches to education is based on a spatial theoretical framework building on Lefebvre and, subsequently, Boys. Referring to case studies, Harrison demonstrates that open digital learning environments are not in themselves inclusive or exclusive, but that they enable ongoing negotiations between designers and learners.

In Chapter 10, "Inclusion and Exclusion in Classroom Practices: Empirical Analyses of Conjunctive Spaces of Experience in Secondary Schools", Tanja Sturm, Benjamin Wagener, and Monika Wagner-Willi focus on the spatiality of learning and teaching practices in classrooms. Their innovative theoretical approach combines aspects of the praxeological sociology of knowledge by Karl Mannheim with a relational understanding of space as suggested by Martina Löw and aspects of Erving Goffman's micro-sociological territorial theory. Canadian and Swiss secondary schools were compared and analyzed in this international research project. This was done using video interpretations based on the documentary method. Through a visual and text-based analysis, the authors identify the conjunctive experiential spaces of teachers with regard to their instructional teaching practices. Their findings show that the support given by teachers based on performance expectations directed at students produced either inclusion or exclusion.

In Chapter 11, Hanna Ragnarsdóttir focuses on "Learning Spaces at the Intersections of Families and Preschools" in Iceland. Interestingly, Ragnarsdóttir develops a theoretical perspective that understands educational spaces primarily as a product of linguistic and culturally responsive educational practices. Through this theoretical lens, the author investigates multicultural and multilingual settings in Icelandic preschools, using empirical data material that includes the perspectives of different actors of schooling: parents, teachers, and principals. As illustrated by empirical data, teachers and principals create learning spaces that are characterized by mutual care practices, flexibility, and



respect. However, although the preschools participating in the study expressed their interest, they did not actively use the various language and cultural resources of families involved.

Andrea Bossen and Georg Breidenstein focus on spatial constructions within the first phase of pandemic-related school closures in Germany. As did other authors in this volume, Bossen and Breidenstein base their theoretical framework on the relational understanding of space developed by Martina Löw in order to read qualitative interviews with primary school teachers. The authors reconstruct spatialized assumptions by teachers, such as “teaching” basics that are taken for granted to exist even when the teachers and students are unable to be together in the classroom. This noteworthy analysis focuses on the spatial constitution of teaching within the ostensibly “normal” physical co-presence of teachers and students in the classroom. According to the authors, this basic spatial condition of teaching can be understood as “inclusion” in a certain sense. At the very least, the crisis of school closures underlines how much any shared and common engagement with the topic depends on a practice of interaction among those physically present.

We hope that readers of this book will be inspired to rethink and analyze inclusion and exclusion in education through various spatial theories. Most importantly we hope that using space as a theoretical tool may provide insights that help to make our education systems more inclusive.

Last but not least, a sincere thank you to Natalie Holzbach, who was an extraordinary and patient support in the creation of the manuscript.

Zurich, Freiburg, and Linz

## Note

- 1 This understanding of doing educational spaces is also mirrored in the concept of Universal Design for Learning, one of the most popular recent concepts in inclusive education literature.

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## 2 Exploring dimensions of access within restrictive spaces of schooling

*Katie Scott Newhouse and Srikala Naraian*

The current way of “doing” inclusive education in many US public schools includes re-arranging the schooling spaces where a young person is receiving their educational services. Many schools and programs are still set up to provide specialized educational services in a specific location, referred to as a restrictive educational program.<sup>1</sup> However, with the support of inclusive educators, many self-advocates, and advocates for people with disabilities, are demanding that the exclusionary practices of special education such as the continued maintenance of restrictive educational programs be dismantled. This is often interpreted within local school policy, as the reduction of the number of students who receive up to 40% of their education segregated from same-aged nondisabled peers (New York City Department of Education, 2021). As many public school districts across the United States move to more inclusive models of teaching and learning, the importance of the spaces where this restrictive form of education happens, matters.

It is important and necessary to state outright that neither author of this chapter believes that anyone who identifies as disabled should be segregated for any part of their educational career. Still, both authors in their research, teaching, and scholarship have noted that the range of educational spaces youth encounter (both general and self-contained) present a host of difficulties for disabled youth and, frequently, for nondisabled youth as well. We are arguing not for the continued maintenance of educational spaces which restrict, but instead for an awareness and understanding in the inclusive education scholarship that spaces are fluid and not fixed, regardless of how they are labeled. This chapter draws on data collected by the first author to meet dissertation requirements. As an ethnographically oriented narrative inquiry, the dissertation explored two separate restrictive educational programs. In this chapter, we focus on one of them.

We take up the lens of critical spatial theory (Harvey, 2013; Massey, 2005; Soja, 2010) from within a disability studies in education (DSE) framework to show how the potentiality of educational spaces are limited too often by the conflicting ideologies circulating within them. We inquire into one restrictive educational program located at a non-public school<sup>2</sup> for youth classified with

low incidence<sup>3</sup> disabilities. Our decision to explore an educational space that is labeled “restrictive” was to better understand the spatial relationship between learning experiences and the larger aims of inclusive education.

A wealth of research (Algozzine et al., 1988; Causton-Theoharis et al., 2011; Dunn, 1968) illustrates the impoverished experience of teaching and learning in restrictive educational programs and highlights the negative outcomes for young people who receive their education in those spaces (Allan, 2006; Bogdan & Kugelmass, 1984; Connor, 2009; Williams & Downing, 1998). Still, in the US public schooling system, restrictive educational spaces persist.

This further complicates our social and temporal understandings of how restrictive educational programs are created and maintained through practices and policies. Huddleston (2013, para. 12) states, “To think spatially is not enough. Spatial thinking must always seek ways to ground itself in the material”. We argue that using the lens of critical spatial theory with a DSE framework helps to broaden our understanding of how educational spaces are created and maintained. This is part of what we want to tease out in regard to self-contained educational programs and to the larger project of inclusive education. As researchers, we need to continue engaging with spaces labeled “restrictive” so that we deepen our understanding of how spatial boundaries, identities, and learning converge. A “spatial turn” (Waitoller & Annamma, 2017) in inclusive educational research helps researchers re-conceptualize or re-imagine how the spaces youth occupy are labeled across their educational careers and how we can more effectively intervene in that process. Our inquiry seeks to engage with this phenomenon from the perspective of students and adults who learn and work in such restrictive educational programs. We view this research as part of moving beyond the spatial turn alongside other chapters in this volume to show the importance of using spatial theories along with disability studies and education to continue untethering fixed understandings of space and place that have marked educational services for people with disabilities.

### **Disability, schooling, and spaces**

Spaces of schooling have emerged as both foundational and contentious within the field of inclusive education. We trace part of its history to the use of the word “environment” in the Least Restrictive Environment feature of the 1992 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (reauthorized in 2004 as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004). The IDEIA sidesteps the issue of defining the LRE and instead provides two guiding principles of how this concept should be employed by members of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. First, IDEIA states that children identified as disabled must receive their education in the general education classroom to the “maximum extent that is appropriate” (IDEA, 2004). Second, IDEIA states that removal from the general education environment into

special classes or separate schools should occur only if the student's disability requires a specific program or service that cannot be provided in the general education environment. This description of LRE from IDEIA leaves to the members of the IEP team the interpretation of what is determined to be "appropriate" and which services needed by the student can or cannot be offered within the general education environment.

Furthermore, it firmly establishes the general education environment as the basis for what constitutes a LRE (IDEA, 2004; Taylor, 1988 [2004]). These decisions are made via the special education continuum of services, which is a feature of the IDEIA (2004) legislation that is used to determine a program of service for a student with a disability label. The continuum is designed to move students along a range of services and programs that are organized from least to most restrictive. In the current conceptualization of the special education continuum of programs and services in the United States, the general education environment is considered to be the least restrictive, and a hospital or home school setting the most restrictive. The special education continuum has been critiqued by many scholars (Nisbet, 2004; Rueda et al., 2000; Taylor, 1988 [2004], 2001). One critique from Taylor (1988 [2004]) and Nisbet (2004) that is germane to the argument we make in this chapter is the ongoing conflation of service and place.

Outcomes are spatialized in part by the taken-for-granted fixed linkage between learning and particular settings as the places to remediate, rehabilitate, or "fix" a young person. Though it is well accepted that special education programs and services may occur at any place (Lipsky & Gartner, 1997), using the special education continuum of programs and services often requires that a young person is placed in a more restrictive environment, which typically results in placement in a separate classroom or school (Taylor, 1988 [2004]). Research shows that once a young person is recommended for a restrictive setting, they remain in more restrictive settings across their educational career (Annamma, 2018; Erevelles, 2014; Voulgarides et al., 2017).

### *Critical spatial theory*

Soja (1989), building on Lefebvre's (1991) work, discusses the three-dimensional quality of space, showing how "spatiality is socially produced" and "exists in both substantial forms and as a set of relations between individuals and groups", noting that space is an "embodiment and a medium of social life itself" (p. 120). Soja's (1989) spatial triad includes first space (the built environment), second space (the representation of the space), and third space (the day-to-day inter- and intra-actions of people and objects, which establishes a social space). It is this notion of the trialectics of space and how this produces certain relations that is integral to understanding critical spatial theory. Soja (1989) argues that while spaces are produced in similar ways, often it is people and their social relationships that maintain a specific space at a specific time.

Soja (2010) describes the ontological claims that a theoretical orientation to space opens up. It is necessary, then, when taking up the lens of critical spatial theory to discuss how spaces are represented. Often spaces are regarded first as their representation. As an example, when visiting an unknown city, a person may use a map, upon which the various neighborhoods are represented. It is an entirely different experience for the person to visit the neighborhood and move from how the area was represented on a map to entering the physical space.

The ways that people and materials within a given space help to construct how the space is experienced and understood shows how space is both an activity and a representation (Massey, 2005). This idea connects to Massey's argument that "space is constituted through social relations and material social practices" (Massey, 1994, p. 250, as cited in Armstrong, 2003, p. 28). From this standpoint, we understand space as both a representation and a reality. This is the three-dimensional quality of space. The ways spaces are represented are connected to how they are lived, imagined, and represented.

Spaces, then, are embodied. Imrie (2015, p. 171) states, "The human body is always emplaced, and its placement is conditioned, in part, by the social content and context of a place". Soja (1989) uses the concept of thirdspace to emphasize the social processes that work in concert with the built and representational space. Spaces are understood to be agentive, both acting and acted upon by the people inhabiting them (Armstrong, 2003). The lens of critical spatial theory helps researchers explore how the materials and bodies within a given space influence one another in terms of how said space is experienced and understood. Furthermore, using critical spatial theory with DSE illuminates how schooling spaces, especially for youth who are identified as disabled, are in continuous flux, though they remain perceived as fixed (Naraian, 2016).

### *Disability studies in education (DSE) framework*

For this project, we follow the definitions developed by Ferguson and Nussbaum (2012, p. 71) that, historically, "Disability Studies reflected the efforts of scholars with disabilities (and some nondisabled colleagues) to conceptualize and interpret the common complaints of people with disabilities and their families". We refer to disability studies in education (DSE) as a framework that scholars use to take up theories from disability studies to understand and study education (Gabel, 2005a). Most DSE scholars engage in projects of educational research that frame disability as a social process to argue for systems of education that provide flexibility for all peoples (disabled or not) to be educated together (Allan, 2006). This means that DSE-informed scholars continue to contest meanings of how ability and disability are conceptualized in schools (Barton, 2013; Gabel, 2005b). This is important to the field of education because a DSE framework suggests that disability classifications do not reflect fixed attributes within a person; rather, such labels emerge from the

encounters of people with institutions in society (Baglieri & Lalvani, 2020). However, a sole reliance on this notion of disability as socially constructed complicates practices of teaching and learning that occur across various spaces of schooling (Newhouse, 2020).

### *Loosening the boundaries of learning spaces*

Taking up a lens of critical spatial theory alongside a DSE framework allows researchers to recognize more starkly institutional practices that may promote inclusion but remain rooted in exclusionary practices (Armstrong, 2003). The continued maintenance of restrictive educational programs in many schools which promote inclusive policies is one example. Such claims to inclusion remain tied to ableist norms about membership in schooling communities. By attending to the spaces themselves and their inhabitants, we can understand social and educational processes within restrictive educational programs and how they help to constitute and reconstitute the meaning of the spaces themselves. Deploying critical spatial theory alongside disability studies surfaces the materiality that may be elided within social constructionist approaches. Instead, by opening up our analyses to the material dimensions of spaces, we are able to draw upon theories of *complex embodiment* (Siebers, 2008) that may be, as many disability studies scholars have argued, more representative of the experiences of actors within various environments.

This allows us to see the potentiality of all spaces, such that determinations of inclusionary or exclusionary practices do not precede their multifaceted enactments within those spaces. It allows us to escape the quandary that many schools face as they scramble to physically include disabled students within mainstream learning environments. If the idea of special education as “place” had spurred an earlier movement away from endless referrals of students to special education settings, “inclusion” has now equally become about “place”—i.e., placement of disabled students in the general education classroom (Naraiian, 2016). Working from a stance that includes both disability studies and critical spatial theory, we are able to recognize this phenomenon while simultaneously extending our imaginings of schooling environments.

### **Method**

This chapter draws on data collected by the first author to meet dissertation requirements. As an ethnographically oriented narrative inquiry, the dissertation explored two separate restrictive educational programs. The purpose of the larger dissertation study completed by the first author was to privilege spatiality while investigating the lived experiences of youth with disability labels and youth who are court involved as well as their educators, within two separate restrictive educational programs. This chapter focuses on data collected by the first author at one research site, the Saturn School,<sup>4</sup> which is a nonpublic school for youth classified with low incidence disabilities.

### *Description of the Saturn School*

The Saturn School is organized as a PreK-12th and offers a range of programs for youth aged 4–21 years old, including specialized classroom instruction, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, access to counseling and other medical services, all within the main school building. Another key feature of the school is its small student population and class size. The current total student enrollment for the school is 185 young people.

Unlike other private schools for disabled youth in the area, the Saturn School does not cater only to families of a higher socioeconomic status. This is partly because the school receives state funding by enrolling only youth identified with low incidence disabilities. Saturn is mandated to enroll youth classified with low incidence disabilities if their local public school districts have demonstrated that they are unable to provide the proper academic and social/emotional supports for them to access the curriculum. Many of the students who attend Saturn come from the larger metropolitan area where the school is located and represent a range of locations along the dimensions of race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status.

### *Description of the research participants*

The larger dissertation consisted of both youth and adult research participants. For this chapter, we include data from three youth enrolled in 12th grade at the Saturn School and one adult, Mr. Harpin, the 12th grade history teacher, during the 2018–19 school year. Tanya, Paul, and Sapphire were all between the ages of 17 and 18. Tanya and Paul had been enrolled at Saturn since kindergarten/early elementary school. Sapphire enrolled later during middle school (typically, 11–14 years) at the start of 9th grade. Each youth participant self-identified as a person with a disability. All three youth used mobility aids (such as a wheelchair or walker) to move around the school environment. After receiving Institutional Review Board<sup>5</sup> approval, all youth and adults were recruited for the study following strict ethical considerations. All youth who returned affirmative parental permission forms also completed assent forms with the lead researcher and another adult at the school serving as witness.

### *Data collection and analysis*

This ethnographic narrative inquiry used purposeful sampling (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Data collection consisted primarily of qualitative ethnographic methods (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2011) such as participant observation, open-ended and semi-structured interviewing, artifact review (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Kim, 2016), and photography (Rose, 2011). The initial phases of data collection (2–3 months) focused on relationship and rapport building with all research participants. Through participating and observing the daily activities in three separate classrooms and eating lunch with youth participants in the cafeteria each day, the first author attended to



the various ways participants were living their stories (Clandinin, 2013; Kim, 2016) prior to scheduling interviews or soliciting information from research participants.

The method of qualitative data analysis drew from the field of narrative inquiry and employed multimodal approaches. Analysis began after a set of descriptive ethnographic field notes were completed and/or an interview was transcribed. Each data source was initially read in its entirety for coherence and content (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009). Then, using broad descriptive coding categories (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) and analytical bracketing (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009, p. 28), the data was analyzed based on descriptive codes such as “interactions between youth and adults” and “youth talking about school”.

### **Achieving accessibility: Beyond physical boundaries**

We begin this section by describing how the Saturn School fore-fronted physical accessibility of the built environment. The youth participants attending Saturn, too, described the emphasis on physical accessibility as aiding in the production of a less stigmatizing learning environment. Soja (2010) argues that how spaces are represented and built may inform how those spaces are experienced by the people interacting within them. Some physical features of Saturn appeared to respond directly to the lived experiences of youth attending the school. The entire school was constructed on one level, and there were no stairs or steps anywhere on site. The principal of Saturn proudly told the first author that he often went above and beyond what is required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) in terms of physical accessibility.<sup>6</sup>

As an example, all the doorways at Saturn were a few inches wider than ADA specifications. This was because of the ever-changing technology of mobility aids (e.g., wheelchairs, walkers), which often resulted in larger equipment. Expanding all the door frames in the school allowed youth to pass in and out of classrooms with ease. Classrooms included desks that were properly constructed for youth to position themselves while using their wheelchair or other mobility aid. This meant most classrooms had very few, if any, chairs. The hallways were also much wider than normally seen in a typical school setting. There was enough space in all hallways for students using wheelchairs to pass by one another without either youth having to stop and wait.

Given the ways the physical environment at Saturn was designed, this was clearly a schooling space that actively worked to address *physical* barriers to participation. When I (first author) asked my youth participants at Saturn to describe their school, many noted the small class sizes, opportunities to receive related services in the same physical building, and the ease of navigating the school space with a mobility aid as the most positive aspects of Saturn. These produced Saturn as less stigmatizing for students than other spaces they occupied where the benefits of such inclusion were unavailable. Paul shared:

Well for instance, going to a restaurant and ordering. The waiter comes over to the table and instead of asking me what I want to eat, they ask the person next to me. As opposed to here [Saturn] where I go to the cafeteria, they ask me.

The physical accessibility of the school space reduced barriers to participation and created a learning environment which some youth participants experienced as assets based.

Still, critiques by other youth participants suggest that physical accessibility cannot by itself transform an environment. Sapphire, another 12th-grade research participant, shared,

I would like [there] to be more activities here because there's not much activity. It's like the only activity is like dancing. This year has been good because we went on a lot of trips. Every time they give us a permission slip, I sign it right away because I want to get out of the building. [During class I'm] bored listening to all these [adults] because it's a lot of stuff I already learned. I feel like I heard all this stuff before [referring to classroom instruction].

Sapphire's desire to "get out of" the building hints at the limitations of the touted physical accessibility of the space when the school's curriculum is inadequate. She remains stuck in a school building that is not challenging her either academically or in her extracurricular interests.

There is an implicit (or perhaps explicit) assumption at the Saturn School that this level of physical accessibility happened only in this location. While the emphasis on physical accessibility demonstrates the potentiality of space, it simultaneously substantiates Taylor's (1988 [2004]) critique of the continuum of services by conflating the service (physical accessibility) with a specific space (the Saturn School). Tanya built on this concern when she shared,

I can't say this is a legitimate statement because I haven't been to another public school long enough to experience this, but it's hard to be socially prepared for moving on to college and stuff in a school like this, 'cause it's very closed off. You're in a very tight knit community. I think we're missing a really huge gap in the social piece.

There was little interaction between the Saturn School and surrounding educational programs, many of which are local public schools that enrolled disabled and nondisabled students. Tanya's statement registers the impermeable nature of the building, which sought a "tight knit" community that needed to be contained within its walls. In other words, the emphasis on achieving physical accessibility and creating a schooling space aimed to maximize possibilities for students was still limited by an implicit assumption that spaces have fixed boundaries. Ultimately, however, this data showed that the affordances of the

Saturn School for physical accessibility were constrained by the exclusionary focus on youth classified with low incidence disabilities. The concerted effort to create a barrier-free environment did not shift how students at the school experienced exclusion from their same-age peers.

### **Disruptions**

Public school was almost always the referent for youth as they described, and sometimes attempted to justify, the daily practices of the Saturn School (Newhouse, 2020). This consistent use of public schools as the point of comparison (by youth and adults in this study) might well have originated in the uniformly negative experiences most of the youth participants in this study shared about attending or being turned away from their local public school. These stories included descriptions of physical inaccessibility, exclusion/isolation, bullying, and the conflation of physical impairment/medical condition with intellectual capability. In their descriptions, youth often positioned Saturn as a less harmful alternative.

During interactions with the students and across our interviews and informal conversations, a “cover story” (Crites, 1979, as cited in Craig, 2003) of the Saturn School emerged. This cover story focused on the positive aspects of the Saturn School, the small class sizes, access to an array of related service provisions, and the family-like atmosphere of the interactions between adults and youth. These aspects of the Saturn School offered a schooling space unlike most public schools in the regional area, in terms of services provided to youth classified with a disability. Yet, when asked to describe their lived experience at Saturn, some youth participants gestured toward the deficit assumptions that circulated in the school and in the ways youth were supported. During our interview, Tanya wondered why different forms of communication elicited different kinds of treatment from educators. Tanya said,

Sometimes it does happen here, like some adults treat kids who are non-verbal a little more childish. There’s kids who are here and sometimes they get pet[ted] or they’re talked to like a toddler. If you’ve been working at the school this long, why are you still doing that?

Conflicting ideologies of ability within the schooling space surfaced during a conversation the first author had with Sapphire. She shared,

*Sapphire:* I want them [teachers/staff] to think of me as an adventurous lady and someone who is always really ready to learn something new. Someone who [is] doing a lot of work. Someone who probably might be famous or might have a lot of fun doing what she’s doing. That’s what I want them to think.

*First author:* And do you feel like people here at [school] think those things about you?

*Sapphire:* Yes and no. Sometimes they [adults] say: “You’re famous!” and they take a lot of photographs of me. They say: “You’re gorgeous, pretty, I like your hair!” Sometimes I don’t think [that’s true].

Analyzing Tanya’s observation along with Sapphire’s comments shows how the space created at the Saturn School while privileging physical accessibility disregarded the social barriers that affected how students came to understand their own (in)capacities. As the youth’s stories illustrated, Saturn pointed toward expansive possibilities of a restrictive space through the emphasis on physical accessibility of the built environment. Yet in the end, while there were glimmers of this potentiality, it was never fully achieved.

An example of how the potentiality of the space was disrupted by circulating understandings of ability came from Mr. Harpin when he described how he develops his curriculum.

I sometimes refer to it as the wild west of teaching, you don’t have an administrator constantly down your back, which is great. I mean with our kids you really can’t do a one-size-fits-all curriculum, so you have to modify, you have to constantly do that. A lot of times you don’t even have time to stop and get approval for those things; you don’t have to. I think outside the box, kind of throw stuff against the wall and see what sticks.

A lot of times kids come with very low expectations [and] I find that sometimes plays to our benefit, because then you don’t necessarily have parents having these high expectations of the kids getting 90s on the [state exam] and stuff. That does [take] a lot of pressure off sometimes the kids and also the teachers.

In the preceding excerpt, Mr. Harpin equates curricular “freedom” as a way to “think outside the box” and “see what sticks”. He illustrates an opportunistic use of ability-based thinking that requires “freedom” for himself while faulting families who (seemingly inappropriately) have “high expectations” for their children. While he stated that an administrator was not “constantly down his back”, during classroom instruction, the first author observed that he did little with this “freedom” outside of taking additional time to follow through on students’ verbal contributions during lessons. Mr. Harpin’s approach contrasts with the “cover story” that emphasizes an accessibility unavailable in public schools. While it is important that the built environment at the Saturn School remain barrier-free, this commitment does not translate to how the adults at the school describe the youth and their responsibility to the curriculum.

To end this section, we share a digital collage of a few of the bulletin boards and spaces within the Saturn School. The bulletin boards include brightly colored slogans: “Everyone fits together”, “Sky’s the limit at Saturn”, and “Growth mindset”. These images reinscribe the cover story of Saturn as a



*Figure 2.1* Digital collage based on Saturn School visual data which includes images of bulletin boards and physical schooling spaces.

*Source:* Katie Scott Newhouse.

“close knit” community which presumes to take an assets-based approach to students and their learning. The first author placed images of the bulletin board on top of photos of physical spaces in the school. The image shows how the physical accessibility of the space is in continuous conversation with the messaging about the school that was not fully actualized within the experiences of its students (Figure 2.1).

### **Conflicting ideologies of ability from within a schooling space**

An analysis of the data showed that attending to the physical spaces of the Saturn School and the educational and social interactions of the adults and youth within the physical space challenges the facile labeling of a learning environment as “restrictive”. It deepens our understanding of the fluidity within the label “restrictive”; yet this label also remains consequential to the freedoms experienced by people who occupy those spaces. This simultaneously *limitless* and *limiting* quality of spaces labeled “restrictive” supports lines of inquiry into notions of accessibility as extending beyond the built environment.

As we discussed earlier, critical spatial theory has the potential for understanding spaces as flexible enough to endure this dynamic process of change. Soja (1989) refers to this as *thirdspace*, which is conceptualized as always occurring and always incorporating first and second space. As our collected data shows, there are glimmers of potentiality from within a space that is labeled “restrictive”. Soja (2010, p. 37) acknowledges, “it is important to remember this double-sidedness, how the spatiality of (in) justice can be both intensely oppressive and potentially liberating”. The collected data from the Saturn School shows how an emphasis on a barrier-free environment intended

solely for students with disabilities might gesture toward inclusivity, but almost always fell short because of the larger system within which it existed. In part this is because Saturn is federally funded to enroll young people classified with low incidence disabilities. This means that however physically accessible the space might be, the school exists because the youth enrolled have already been excluded from their same-age nondisabled peers who attend public schools. As the youth at Saturn reported, the built environment was accessible, but the learning environment remained constraining both socially and academically.

Tanya, a youth participant from the Saturn School, when asked to describe the school, laughed quietly and said, “I mean we don’t bring up school, we’re teenagers, no one really does”. This serves as a reminder that all schools are in some ways restrictive, no matter how accessible the built environment may be. Tanya’s comment brought forth the important consideration that while young people here in the United States spend large portions of their childhoods in schooling spaces, it is often without their full assent. For some youth, there is little value in discussing a space that pays little regard to their lived experiences and input.

Soja (2010), in his critical spatial (in)justice theory, calls for a type of spatial consciousness, which he describes as a reflexive awareness of the spaces people occupy across their lifetimes, along with a reflexive historical social awareness of the injustices enacted and replicated through the production and maintenance of spaces. At Saturn, the adult participants rarely speculated about their students’ lives outside of school, except to emphasize the benefits that Saturn provided to the youth enrolled there. Again, this draws out a complication that may always exist for schools but that an interrogation of the label “restrictive” further illuminates.

The ways schools are organized, especially in the post–No Child Left Behind era, which ushered in heightened mandates for standards, accountability, and evidence-based achievement, makes it difficult for educators to imagine different productions of schooling. Schools, especially public or state-funded schools, claim there are specific goalposts, which young people must meet. Schools are built and designed as fixed containers for young people. Put another way, all schools are sites of restrictive practices, which often erases or obscures the material consequences of deficit-tinged thinking. Critical spatial theory shifts the conversation away from which environment is the least restrictive to consider which spatial configuration offers the most flexibility to support students to fully participate in the curriculum and wider school community. Therefore, projects of inclusive education that fail to take up critical spatial theories run the risk of reproducing the restrictive environments which proponents of inclusive education seek to dismantle.

This takes seriously the socio-spatial dialectic occurring within self-contained schooling spaces and maintains an orientation toward opening up sites of possibility even from within a space labeled “restrictive”. The confluence of special education support and the spaces where they are delivered need not remain bound to fixed-place/fixed-ability thinking. One way to untether this is to continue to explore *how* young people describe their experiences of

receiving services in restrictive educational settings. As the data from this study suggests, young people not only desire the benefits of an accessible setting and a close-knit community that a restrictive setting may provide, but also possibilities to access similar experiences as their peers in other settings. Inclusive education runs the risk of working against, or in tension with, its theoretical underpinnings if the term “restrictive” continues to be used in regard to placement. We need more research that can inquire into this spatialized component of special education service delivery.

## Notes

- 1 For the purposes of this chapter, we follow special education policy and legislation (IDEA, 2004) that defines a restrictive educational program as: a space either in a school or outside of school where a young person is mandated to attend and remain enrolled for a period of time (60 days to the entire school year). This mandate may come from the service program described on the young person’s individualized educational plan (IEP). An educational space is deemed restrictive because it is located outside of the general education classroom setting and results in disabled youth spending less instructional time with their same-age nondisabled peers. Another important feature of restrictive educational programs is the lower ratio of young people to adults in a given space (e.g., a restrictive educational program may have 12 students, with one teacher and one paraprofessional; whereas a general education classroom, considered less restrictive, typically has 25–35 students with one teacher).
- 2 The research site is a nonpublic school which receives state funding and private donorship. In the state where the school is located, additional funding is allocated to schools which provide educational services for youth classified with low incidence disabilities. Schools that receive this type of funding are referred to as nonpublic schools because they do not adhere to the public school district where they are physically located.
- 3 The term “low incidence disability” is defined in IDEA legislation as: a visual or hearing impairment, or simultaneous visual and hearing impairments; a significant cognitive impairment; or any impairment for which a small number of personnel with highly specialized skills and knowledge are needed in order for children with that impairment to receive early intervention services or a free appropriate public education (IDEA, 2019, <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/statute-chapter-33/subchapter-iv/part-b/1462/c/3>).
- 4 The Saturn School is a pseudonym for the data collection site. All site and participants’ names are pseudonyms.
- 5 Institutional Review Board is the name for the process of ethical review that all research involving human participants must complete prior to engaging in recruitment or data collection at our respective universities.
- 6 The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is federal legislation in the United States that includes guidelines and requirements for creating physically accessible spaces.

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# 3 From excluding schools to excluding spaces

## Spatial and postcolonial reflections on inclusive education in Africa

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### Introduction

African countries have been pursuing inclusive education for children with disabilities since the mid-1990s, as seen in various national policy frameworks (see, for example, Education White Paper 6 of South Africa, Department of Education [DOE], 2001; Kenya National Special Needs Education Policy Framework, Ministry of Education, 2009; Ghana Inclusive Education Policy, Ministry of Education, 2013; and Educating Our Future policy document, The Government of the Republic of Zambia, 1996). However, the goal of achieving inclusive education remains elusive. While studies have put the blame on factors like negative attitudes toward children with disabilities, lack of disability awareness, poverty, and a shortage of teachers, among others (Elder, 2015; Leonard Cheshire Disability, 2017), we additionally argue that failure to consider the complexities constructed by the encounter between Western conceptualizations of inclusive education and indigenous African ontologies and experiences complicates its implementation. The implementation of inclusive education is also complicated by not being attentive to the dynamics constructed by the encounter between the special school and the mainstream school in Africa. These complexities and dynamics of inclusive education often lead to a different, othered experience from the hegemonic discourse of inclusive education as a “good thing” in Africa. We suggest the need for a critical approach toward inclusive education that creates spaces for knowledge synergies. Our reflections draw on literature as well as our collective experiences of over 60 years as African scholars of disability and education, herein including the insights of two of us who are people with disabilities and another two of us who have children with disabilities. We use concepts from space theory and postcolonial theory to aid this exploration.

### *Understanding education as Third Space*

Space theory examines social and material constitutions of spaces to understand social practices, institutional forces, as well as material complexities of the way people and spaces interact (Löw, 2016; Urry, 2004). We find the idea

of Third Space to be particularly helpful in our current analysis. Based on the work of Soja (1998), Third Space allows thinking beyond the physical space (the first space) and the imagined space (second space) to the lived space (Third Space). An example of the first space could be the geographical area in which the mainstream school is located. This is a real space where one pursues or figures out the space. The second space could be a place where children with diverse needs, including disabilities, are imagined to access, participate, and achieve success in education. The Third Space considers the lived reality of the place that children with diverse needs actually converge, including their experience of learning, interactions, socialization or play, and so forth. Thus, Third Space is that in which we live; the space encompassing both the physical space and the imagined space. It is complex, being constantly transformed because it is the experience of living. We draw on the Third Space concept to explain some of the complexities of educational exclusion and inclusion, and to help identify dynamics that might more effectively ameliorate exclusion in Africa.

Acknowledging our location in the postcolonial context of Africa, we consider as equally crucial Bhabha's ideas of Third Space in the context of colonialism and the colonized. Bhabha (1994), through the idea of Third Space, argues for a cultural multiplicity and a continuous cultural change across times regardless of one's colonial influences. Accordingly, cultures do not have distinct, permanent beings, but rather shift and are defined by those who carry them. Cultures, thus, interweave and change with the current location and the past location of the people—creating the Third Space—a hybrid of cultures within the people. To further elucidate what is Third Space, Licona (2012) uses the idea of borderlands. A borderland consists of a space on both sides of a border, itself being both a fabricated and a real division. Third Space transgresses such borders, reconfiguring and reimagining them to forge new possibilities and realities. Bhabha sees Third Space as the “zone of creativity, exploration and contestation that accepts neither the terms of the self-assured colonizer nor the reactive formations of the colonized” (Bodman, 2021, p. 585).

New forms of postcolonial educational thought might benefit from accommodating Third Space—the hybrid space (Enslin, 2017). A postcolonial stance to the education of children with disabilities could focus on what the existing formal education system shaped by Western ideologies can learn from indigenous cultures and forms of education. This could inform a hybrid system of education that is categorized not as Western or African, but as one with its own identity and practices. Such a system is important to address the pressing issues and problems in Africa like the need to democratize the classroom and to establish the relevance of the curriculum, including the need to be sensitive to social and cultural contexts within the curriculum and the syllabus, among other issues concerning educational redress and transformation (Horsthemke & Enslin, 2009). The ideas of Third Space are helpful in an endeavor to come up with a system of education that is responsive to the needs of Africa, but that is not bound by the binary of Africa versus the west.

*The coloniality of modern education*

Kliwer and Fitzgerald (2001) have traced segregation based on disability to Western colonialism and suggested a symbiotic relationship between colonial values and both race-based oppression and disability-based oppression. For example, education during colonialism in most African countries was based on the racial lines of Europeans, Indians, and Africans. The education system for European children was meant to be superior to that of Indians and Africans, with the goal of defining the socioeconomic relationships among people in the different racial constructs. While European children could even proceed for higher education in other parts of the world, the curriculum for Indians and Africans was meant to produce craftsmen and clerical officers to serve the European colonial economic interests (Mackatiani et al., 2016). Children with disabilities were seen as not capable of undertaking gainful employment and thus not able to serve the colonizer's economic interests (Ndurumo, 1993). As a result, these children faced neglect when it came to accessing education, as they were perceived to be draining the community resources (Kiarie, 2014).

Christianity, propagated by missionaries who mostly came from the colonizing countries, played a significant part in making people accept the institutionalization of children with disabilities in Africa (Gachago, 2018). Most of the special schools in the colonial era were started and run by Christian missionaries, and children with disabilities in Africa were taken to these exclusive institutions for care and protection (Chitiyo & Muwana, 2018; Zigmond, 2003). Following this influence of the church, the education of children with disabilities was largely considered to be a charitable service. For instance, the Ngala Mwendwa committee, officially known as the Committee for the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled, which was instituted by the Kenyan government in 1964 with the purpose of restructuring and formulating policy guidelines for children with disabilities, focused on care and institutionalization (Gebrekidan, 2012; Mwendwa, 1964). Notwithstanding the good intentions of the missionaries, for instance to protect the children with disabilities from harm and abuse in the society, putting the children in special schools had the impact of devaluing indigenous forms of education. In the move to institutions, children were separated from their families and from the general community, which had hitherto been important agents of education (Abilla, 1988; Karisa et al., 2021).

To institutionalize children with disabilities, different types of disabilities were defined, and the public was informed about which individuals were to be considered disabled (Gebrekidan, 2012; Mwendwa, 1964). These new definitions of disability introduced Westernized understandings of disability, which might not necessarily have been similar to the indigenous African knowledges around disability. According to Soudien and Baxen (2006), definitions of disability often disadvantage people with disabilities through highlighting what is desirable and what is not. Such definitions give rise to outcasts, thus propagating the need for institutionalization and special care.

The institutionalization of children with disabilities in Africa can also be related to the eugenics movement in the global North, when people with disabilities were taken away from the society to “protect it” by preventing them from breeding and supposedly lowering the quality of the population (Artiles et al., 2016; Goodheart, 2004). The missionaries that established exclusive institutions for children with disabilities in Africa may equally have been influenced by the eugenics movement that was trending in the global North. Nevertheless, the progress made in the global North in the field of special education later led to the provision of education in the exclusive institutions for children with disabilities (Slee, 2018). African countries replicated the approach of the global North toward educating children with disabilities, albeit at a slower pace and less comprehensively. This advent perpetuated a need for specialized spaces with specialized teachers to educate the children with disabilities, and, as that happened, the children stopped belonging in the nonspecialized spaces. It was not long before such segregated education began to be questioned in the global North, a move that led to the pursuit of inclusive education (Daniels & Cole, 2010; Slee, 2018).

It is evident that the space of education for children with disabilities in Africa has mirrored the thinking and practice that has been used in the Western contexts. This thinking and practice was intended to support the colonial enterprise, not the indigenous population. When it comes to Africa, this phenomenon of education interacts with local knowledge systems, local resources, and strained economic realities, among other factors, transforming into a Third Space that transgresses the border of Western thinking and African thinking. In the following section, we further develop our argument by interrogating how inclusive education unreels as a Third Space in African contexts. We start by describing inclusive education and locating its global North origins.

### *Inclusive education and its roots*

Inclusive education seeks to do away with the dichotomy of the special school and the regular school. Its key premise is that schools are to provide quality education for all children and youth regardless of race, class, culture, language, gender, ethnicity, dis/ability, or other identity markers. This means that building an inclusive education system requires changes to the way in which people understand, conceptualize, explain, and respond to diversity in the learner population (Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2011; Walton, 2018). Inclusive education emerged from the notion of equity and rights, and as a way of addressing inequalities and injustices. This is qualified by the international policy guidelines that have provided the overall framework for policy developments in inclusive education such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations General Assembly, 1948), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 1989), the Standard Rules on the Equalization of

Opportunities for Disabled Persons (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UNDESA], 1993), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN General Assembly, 2006), the Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2000), and the Global Education Monitoring report (UNESCO, 2020). All these frameworks accentuate the importance of education for all learners regardless of individual diversities.

In Africa, inclusive education is similarly framed within the Western-oriented human rights discourse, as evident in education policies (see for example DOE, 2001; Ministry of Education, 2009, 2013; Federal Ministry of Education, 2015; The Government of the Republic of Zambia, 1996). The human rights discourse tends to elevate individual rights and autonomy and to ignore African ontologies of collectivity and accountability to the group and not to the individual alone (Maldonado-Torres, 2017; Meekosha, 2011). It may be helpful for the human rights discourse to tap into indigenous African ideas of communality, which cherish belonging to the community as well as the possession of values such as compassion, empathy, reciprocity, and solidarity (Bannink et al., 2019). Inclusive education as exported by the global North could be seen as a neocolonial project perpetuating the epistemic violence—violence exerted against or through knowledge (Spivak, 1988)—that started with formal colonialism. It is a form of coloniality because knowledges from the global North dominate its conceptualization. Countries of the global South are expected to implement this education model developed in the resource-rich global North, without necessarily paying attention to contextual realities such as their high poverty rates (Grech, 2015; Walton, 2018). To put it another way, there is not enough attention paid to the Third Space created by the interaction between the discourse of inclusive education from the global North and the indigenous African experiences and understandings.

*Inclusive education as Third Space: Transgressing the global North context and the African context*

In this section, we explore inclusive education as Third Space, transgressing the borders of the global North context and the African context, and the new realities that it forms. Although there might be a multiplicity of voices in the global North on the discourse of inclusive education, we observe that voices from the global South, including Africa, are hardly part of those debates (Grech, 2011a). This means that the views from the global South regarding inclusive education are often left behind; there is no mutual exchange of knowledge between the two contexts but the global North imposing its views on inclusive education on the global South.

For example, one such issue is whether inclusive education should be about disability only or should adopt a broader view of diversity beyond disability. Most versions of inclusive education tend to fall within the latter view (see, for example, UNESCO [2020] with the rallying call “all means all”, highlighting the need to appreciate diversity in terms of gender, age, location, poverty,

ethnicity, displacement status and sexual orientation, and so forth, in addition to disability, in the inclusive education discourse). However, when it comes to Africa, it might be helpful to specifically focus on disability because, as observed by UNDESA (2018), persons with disabilities are profoundly excluded in terms of school attendance and successful completion, compared to the trends in high-income countries. For instance, the World Bank (2018) notes that fewer than 10% of all children under the age of 14 with disabilities attend school in Africa. If we go for diversity as a whole when addressing inclusive education in Africa, then persons with disabilities can drop to the bottom of the list yet again.

We also observe that educational spaces may be understood differently between Africa and the global North. While the global North tends to place the school as the primary space of education, indigenous African thought may imagine the space of education as going beyond schooling; that education is everywhere, including in the family and in the general community (McKenzie & Chataika, 2018). The absence of schools does not mean the absence of education. In this sense, education in Africa does not start with the emergence of formal schools during colonial times. Education has always been there in precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial times (Nyerere, 1961; Ocitti, 1973). All the same, we do not intend in this chapter to homogenize the ideas of education of indigenous African localities. Rather, we consider some indigenous educational practices that maintain a strong hold in certain African communities, that may impact upon the physical, cognitive, social, and emotional competencies of children and deserve consideration within conceptualizations of education.

For instance, as African children grow, they often participate in differentiated cultural activities and are gradually assigned roles based on the perception of their social maturity or competence. On that note, McKenzie and Chataika (2018, p. 322) observe that:

the concept of “child labour” has little latitude in Africa as children are introduced to various household chores early as part of social maturation and not as a form of abuse. To train responsibility, parents and caregivers allocate chores to children or send them on neighbourhood errands ... The “work” children do socialises cognition, values and productive skills. It also generates knowledge and eases social integration.

Also, from a young age, the peer group in Africa plays an important role in developing social cognition in the child. Through peer culture, the child captures shared routines and participatory learning as contrasted to completing school-based instruments (McKenzie & Chataika, 2018). Besides, Snelson (1974) gives an example of indigenous African education in Northern Rhodesia as consisting of instruction in the history and tradition, apprenticeship in practical skills, instruction on social obligations and inculcation of good manners mostly by parents, religious teaching centered on the supreme, and

learning through observations and imitation. Such an education is largely nondiscriminatory for people in the community, even for those with disabilities (Sefotho, 2021). Additionally, Parkin (1991, p. 44) makes a significant observation about the indigenous ways of knowledge making among the Giriama of Kenya, thus: “While western thought distinguishes a place of learning from the learning itself, and the learning from its effects, these three are conjoined (in the Giriama ways of knowledge)”. With the foregoing realities, when it comes to inclusive education, we, in Africa, are often trying to work out which educational space is being considered. Is it the indigenous African community-based space, or is it the Western school-based space?

The UNESCO Salamanca Statement declares that:

Regular (mainstream) schools with ... (an) inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society, and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system.

(UNESCO, 1994)

This statement seems to cement the primacy of the school-based space in providing education. As already noted, the mainstream school as currently constituted in Africa is based mostly on a Western conceptualization of how education should happen. This schooling system was exported to Africa wholesale with little regard to how the indigenous African populations perceived education. The epistemic violence that followed colonization is well documented in the literature (see, for example, Fanon, 1967; Grech, 2011b; Spivak, 1988). Among other things, colonialism dehumanized Africans, negated their agencies, effaced their civilizations, and inscribed in them a way of life that draws from the colonizer’s ontology. This explains why African ontologies on the nature of education are mostly ignored. African communities were mistakenly dismissed as lacking an education because they were considered illiterate based on the colonizer’s definition of literacy. Although most Africans may not have possessed reading and writing skills using alphanumeric, it does not mean they were not educated. Their education was strategic, a “means whereby one generation transmits the wisdom and knowledge, and experiences which prepare the next generation for life’s duties and pleasures” (Snelson, 1974, p. 1). This is in contrast to the Western notions of education that emphasize individualism and intellectualism (Bray et al., 1986).

It means that, unlike formal Western thinking of the place of education that may be distanced from the immediate societal output or may aim for a different kind of output, indigenous African ideas of doing education interweave more with the immediate expectations of the community. Serpell (1993) explored what education meant to Africans, observing that, for example, conceptions of assessing intelligence among the Chewa people of Eastern Zambia



were different from those used by Western education systems that often use formal tests. According to Serpell, intelligence among the Chewa was anchored on four constructs: *nzelu* (wisdom) and *chenjela* (aptitude), which represent the cognitive aspects of intelligence; and *tumilika* (responsibility) and *khulupikila* (trustworthiness), which represent the social aspects. Again, the linking of aptitude with the social expectations of wisdom, responsibility, and trustworthiness exemplifies the inseparability of the space of education from the space of daily life in the community.

This inseparability of spaces in African ontologies is also seen in religion. Biko (1987, p. 93), juxtaposing Christianity and African traditional religions, writes:

The first (white) people to come and relate to blacks in a human way in South Africa were the missionaries. They were in the vanguard of the colonisation movement to “civilise and educate” the savages and introduce the Christian message to them. The religion they brought was quite foreign to the black indigenous people. African religion in its essence was not radically different from Christianity. We also believed in one God, we had our community of saints through whom we related to our God, and we did not find it compatible with our way of life to worship God in isolation from the various aspects of our lives. Hence worship was not a specialised function that found expression once a week in a secluded building, but rather it featured in our wars, our beer-drinking, our dances and our customs in general.

The current space of schools, which are removed from the daily lives of the learners, resembles the space of the church stipulated by Biko, where people visit to worship God and then go back home to their “normal life”. When the space of inclusive education is separated from the space of the general life in the community, a risk exists of inclusion ending at school and not being extended to the community or at home where the same welcoming environment provided at school is required. Still, it can be argued that the two spaces of education and home suggested by Western thought are not entirely separate. What is experienced at the school can extend to the general life. This is perhaps what the UNESCO Salamanca Statement meant when it suggested that regular schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective ways of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities and building an inclusive society.

That said, we try to work out not only the general education space under consideration in the discourse of inclusive education, but also the differentiated educational spaces of the special school and the inclusive school. Western thought of inclusive education is mostly about taking from the special school—the segregated schooling space—and putting in the mainstream school. In indigenous African thought, it is often not about that dichotomy, because there are no segregated schools anyway (because education is not a preserve of a few financed institutions). As has been observed by Karisa, McKenzie, and

De Villiers (2021), the distinction between the special school and the mainstream school is not always an issue in Africa. Inclusive education in this context is often about moving learners from the community where, according to Western thought, there is “no education”, into the schooling status. In other words, inclusive education is about bridging the gap between those in school and those outside school (who are receiving education in the community and not in the school) rather than bridging the gap between those in the special school and those in the mainstream school.

It is also noted that the Western perspective of inclusive education has mostly focused on the realm of the physical environment, pedagogical aspects, and educational support structures for learners and teachers (see, for example, Jafthas, 2008; Muthukrishna & Schoeman, 2000; Sikes et al., 2007; Walton & Rusznyak, 2017). It has unwittingly often neglected the role and perspectives of families and the community as well as the atmosphere, experiences, and emotional connection of the children themselves in the inclusive education settings (Karisa et al., 2021; Singal et al., 2021; Waitoller & Annamma, 2017; Watermeyer et al., 2021). This contrasts with some indigenous African ontologies where “inclusion” is not an afterthought of school and policy makers on behalf of persons with disabilities, but a natural inalienable prerogative because everyone belongs (Mbiti, 1990). There could be a need to take into account what families and children with disabilities themselves make of the space of the inclusive schools. Karisa et al. (2021) have, for example, shown that fathers of children with disabilities in African contexts sometimes care more about their children acquiring functional and academic skills that support social and economic inclusion, rather than the achievement of a Western academic ideal. In that case, the parents are not concerned about where the education of their children with disabilities happens—it can happen at the special school, at the mainstream school, or even at home—provided the children acquire skills that can make them lead lives with greater ease.

We have described how inclusive education as Third Space created by transgressing the border of global North contexts and the border of African contexts may be perceived in new, complex ways in Africa that might even be disempowering. We now explore further the possibilities and realities of inclusive education as Third Space transgressing the borders of the special school and the mainstream school.

*Inclusive education as Third Space: Transgressing the special school and the mainstream school*

We demonstrate how inclusive education in Africa, as Third Space resulting from bridging the gap between the special school and the mainstream school, may be experienced in different ways from those imagined in its emancipatory discourse. To begin with, persons with disabilities still have to negotiate their lived experiences even in the inclusive education setting. To exemplify, how inclusion has been presented in African policies commodifies values around

social justice by creating and objectifying the “included” child (Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2011). This process of objectification threatens to assimilate and normalize those targeted for “inclusion” (Graham & Slec, 2008; Ngcobo & Muthukrishna, 2011), thereby disguising the instantiation of exclusion. Bantjes et al. (2015) have shown how children with cerebral palsy in South Africa experience bodily exclusion in an inclusive school. For instance, because of resource and time limitations, such children have to watch (and be watched) while others play football. “The issue of having to watch or be watched in a world in which participation on an equal basis is ostensibly but not actually catered for is an injustice which has implications far beyond the lives of these particular children” (Bantjes et al., 2015, p. 484).

In the foregoing case, we highlight the fact that the lived experience (Third Space) of the children with cerebral palsy in the inclusive school is different, even negative, rather than beneficial to them. In a similar way, Anderson (2005) draws attention to how emancipatory civil movements aimed at increasing the rights of people with disabilities operate to discipline bodies; exercising power on how people with disabilities should act. In the same vein, when children with disabilities enter an inclusive school, they appear to be made to subscribe to a global culture with little regard to what they want as individuals. The case of the Deaf and hard of hearing (HH) is particularly significant. The Deaf and HH are sometimes members of a proud Deaf culture (Ram & Muthukrishna, 2001; Stander & Mcilroy, 2017), a circle where they can thrive without being subservient to the hearing culture (Gerner de Garcia & Becker Karnopp, 2016). In this way, educating the Deaf and HH in special schools for the Deaf and HH might be viewed as more progressive than educating them in regular schools because “schools that provide learners with access to education in the language of their choice, a language to which they have full access, may be seen as inclusive and equitable in the more complex use of the terms” (Aarons & Akach, 2002, p. 163).

Another issue regarding inclusive education as a Third Space is around responsibilities. Veck (2009, p. 53) notes that “all persons are equal within an educational institution because within it each has a responsibility to create spaces that are worthy of everyone’s belonging”. The question arising from such an assertion is whether this act of creation of a welcoming society is more of an interpersonal ethic rather than a responsibility, because it is dependent upon the positioning of the persons involved. The power relations existing in the classroom can, for example, make teaching assistants perceive themselves as having a lesser role in creating an inclusive classroom than a classroom teacher. A nondisabled child could as well perceive himself or herself as having a passive role to play to actualize inclusiveness in the classroom compared to a child with a disability, especially when the latter is objectified, as suggested by Ngcobo and Muthukrishna (2011). There might be a need for a nuanced address of such power relations to bring every stakeholder on board, rather than taking for granted the reality of such political complexities in the lived space of the inclusive school.

### Conclusion

We view inclusive education in Africa as an exemplar of Third Space, transgressing the ideological borders of the global North context and the African context, as well as the educational borders of the special school and the mainstream school. As it does this, inclusive education is transformed, creating new possibilities, and new realities—which are not always positive. Although inclusive education is projected as a newer postcolonial schooling system in Africa with emancipatory aims, unraveling the coloniality of the approach reveals a rather marginalizing stance. The emancipatory stance of inclusive education comes with the same baggage as the other forms of addressing the supposed needs of children with disabilities, transferred to Africa from the global North. Acknowledging Third Space as the zone of creativity, exploration, and contestation (Bhabha, 2004), we see the need to adopt a critical stance when considering inclusive education, to recognize whether it replicates some of the marginalizations that have happened before and to exhume the voice and contributions of indigenous knowledge systems that can support the education of children with disabilities. We propose the start of a journey where the taken-for-granted assumptions of inclusive education as a “good thing” are critically examined with respect to the realities of the African context. The goal is to reconfigure and reimagine education for all to embrace dynamism that is responsive to the lived realities of Africa.

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## 4 Evaluating education policies through a spatial lens

### Uncovering the ability-space-regimes of Austrian new middle schools

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#### **Introduction: The new middle school policy in Austria**

The New Middle School Reform can be considered the most ambitious education policy in Austria in the last decade. In order to dissolve the institutionalized segregation of students within Austrian secondary education—the sorting of students either into grammar schools (*Allgemeine Höhere Schulen*) or the modern general school (*Hauptschule*)—this policy aimed to create a new school type; the new middle school. These different tracks after primary school provide distinct forms of preparation, either general or academic. Which track students choose plays a central role in their educational career and often determines advanced educational opportunities across the life course. In order to reduce the reproduction of social inequality inscribed in these educational choices, former modern general schools were transformed in new middle schools (NMS), but grammar schools remained unchanged, including their own curricula. However, the new middle school as a “new school for all” (BZLS, 2015, p. 22, authors’ translation) was supposed to cater for all students, regardless of their levels of academic abilities. Thus, NMS are thought to be a space of education in which all students were educated “under one roof” (BMUKK, 2011, p. 3, authors’ translation)—in an individualized, differentiated way (BMUKK, 2011).

Furthermore, fueled by discourses around the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006), education in NMS was supposed to follow an inclusive, “modern pedagogy” (BMBF, 2015a, p. 2, authors’ translation), avoiding labeling of students and removing barriers to learning (BMUKK, 2012). Thus, a major focus of the policy was to avoid “ability grouping”, which had before structured the teaching of students in main subjects in modern general schools. Hence, through additional staff resources, teachers were thought to be enabled to teach students in “heterogeneous groups” (BZLS, 2015, p. 40, authors’ translation) in main subjects in an individualizing way, responding to the differing needs of learners (BMUKK, 2012). Accordingly, the newly introduced New Middle School Curriculum frequently referred to the principles of flexible differentiation, individualization, and inclusion (BMUKK, 2012). Furthermore, this new curriculum

foresaw teachers reducing learning barriers and fostering participation by teaching students with certified special educational needs (SEN) according to the NMS curriculum. This should, only if necessary, be combined with specific curricula for students with SEN. So-called “integration classes” within the NMS were considered a suitable environment for practicing inclusive education—also because these classes are characterized by additional, specifically trained personnel resources consisting in an additional special needs teacher and, also if necessary, hourly support by another special needs teacher (BMBF, 2015b).

This chapter is located at the intersection of disability studies in education and policy analysis. In the following, we combine space theory with an ableism-critical perspective. In doing so, we aim to contribute to the goals of the edited volume at hand, exploring the benefits of such a theoretical framework for analyzing educational processes of inclusion and exclusion. Hence, we employ this perspective for what has been termed a “small-scale policy analysis” (Thomson et al., 2010). In this endeavor, we present an ethnographic case study analyzing the ability space regime of a so-called “integration class” at a new middle school in Vienna, asking if and how the identified spatial practices relate to the mentioned educational aims of the NMS policy. As we will show, the ostensibly “inclusive” teaching, taking place under the “surface” of a new middle school, is permeated by spatialized, ability-based hierarchies, illuminating an untouched, persistent ableist grammar of schooling. In the following, we begin by outlining our theoretical perspective, which draws on concepts of sociological spatial research and dis/ability studies. We then present our empirical findings, before discussing main results in the last section of the chapter.<sup>1</sup>

### **Merging theoretical perspectives: Combining space and ability**

Educational reforms affect school environments in specific ways. Indeed, policies “translate themselves in space and thus become visible in institutions, practices and the concrete doings of actors at the local level” (Freytag et al., 2015, p. 92, authors’ translation). However, intended policy goals are not implemented without frictions in the spaces of schools (Ball et al., 2012). Even though actors in schools are considered to work in accordance with discourses and instructions embedded in policy papers, legal regulations, guidelines, and so on, these processes are fragile and intractable, often producing outcomes that are not intended by the policies (Youdell, 2011). Thus, inconsistencies, tendencies to persist, and unintended local effects occur during implementation processes (Ball et al., 2012). In addition, actors in schools have a certain room for maneuvering when implementing educational policy guidelines. At the same time, they are limited by path dependence of educational reforms and the persistent, powerful structures of schools (Buchner, 2022a). Due to these problems and dynamics, a critical analysis of the educational spaces of schools seems fruitful for the study of the implementation of educational policies.

In the following, we outline a relational understanding of space, as it was developed by various authors of spatial sociology (e.g., Lefebvre, 1991; Löw, 2001; Massey, 2005; Soja, 1989). After that, we link our relational thinking of space with the concept of ableism. As we argue, this theoretical matrix allows for a critical analysis of the implementation of (inclusive) education policies on the micro level of teaching.

The term “relational” refers to the interrelatedness of materiality and sociality in the production of space. Accordingly, space is socially constituted and constructed by subjects, in relation to material conditions (Löw, 2001). Building on these axioms, German sociologist Martina Löw proposes two different, but interwoven concepts for analyzing the production of spaces: *placing* and *synthesizing* (Löw, 2006). The first concept, placing, refers to the *positioning practices of subjects and things*, through which specific spaces are produced. In relation to school, for example, certain arrangements of chairs, tables, blackboards, teachers, and students as well as practices of teaching and learning create (different) spaces of education. For example, placing students at table groups as well as the teacher’s instruction to work on tasks in teams produce spaces in the classroom that are shaped by the specific positioning of subjects and the orchestration of practices of group work. The second Löw concept, synthesizing, stands for spatialized practices, by which placements, practices, and arrangements of things are *synthesized to a (specific) space by subjects*. For example, sporting goods, students performing exercises with them, and the instructions of a teacher wearing a track suit become a gym if these goods, persons, and their practices are *synthesized* as a gym. However, synthesizing means more than mere perception and a categorical classification of spaces (e.g., as football stadium, music hall, classroom, or toilet), as the concept also includes processes of attributing meaning or affects. For example, an exam in the biology room can be synthesized as a space of fear. Finally, which qualities and characteristics structure a space depends on placement and further practices between actors. For example, a benevolent, encouraging addressing of students by teachers creates different qualities of a learning space than deficient interpellations of students. Following the latter aspect, arrangements of subjects, goods, and practices produce specific atmospheres (Löw, 2001). For example, in relation to school, some pedagogical practices might produce spaces of boredom (Wellgraf, 2018), while caring practices among friends in the schoolyard might create spheres of solidarity (Petrik, 2020). In conclusion, placing and synthesizing need to be understood as two different but interrelating practices of “doing space”.

However, for our analysis, another assumption is of particular relevance. Following Löw (2001), spatial constructions always take place in relation to social orders and discourses. For example, historically, but even still today, discourses on gender and learning have led to the construction of spaces of gender-separated education, such as boys’ schools. Importantly, such spatial orders shape subjectivities of the individuals inhabiting them. In other words, spaces have a subjectifying effect (Foucault, 1975). For this chapter, we

explore these constructions of space in the so-called “integration class” of a new middle school with a focus on the role of ability. In doing so, we draw on insights from dis/ability studies, specifically the analytical perspective of ableism and the interconnected critique of a specific mode of producing social inequality.

Studies of ableism focus on the significance of ability for social orders, as well as the associated processes of inclusion and exclusion (Campbell, 2009; Wolbring, 2012). For example, notions of normality are linked to specific expectations of ability, which go hand in hand with practices of belonging, participation, the distribution of resources, and other forms of de/privileging (Campbell, 2009). These notions of ability-based normalcy create the dichotomy of dis/ability and the associated “great divide” (Campbell, 2003). Next to this binary structure, ableist orders are characterized by a fundamental hierarchy by which subjects are categorized and sorted (Buchner, 2022b). However, a specific characteristic of ableist orders is their fluid and permeable hierarchy, which creates certain compulsions and affects. Indeed, ableist orders create what has been termed as compulsory able-bodiedness (McRuer, 2006): the imperative to become recognizable as “able” in order to prevent positioning as disabled, and the interwoven practices of exclusion and de-privileging that come with it. Thus, ableist orders create fantasies of the “able” subject, a signifier filled with mandatory or rather “existential abilities” (Wolbring, 2008). Subjects learn to desire to guide themselves toward that phantasm, as such a position promises belonging to the majority of the able and the privileges interlinked therewith. However, as mentioned, ableist orders are not only structured by the “ableist divide” and the associated affects and practices of not/belonging, but also by a continuous, ability-related ranking.

Thus, ableist orders create not only the terror of compulsorily performing as “able”, but the politics of punishment and exclusion for those located beyond the “ableist divide”. They also force every subject to strive for a higher rank and the associated privileges, such as increased levels of participation and agency. In other words, ableist orders, embedded in meritocratic education systems and neoliberalism, infect subjectivities with the need to perform more strongly and more ably than others, supported by ableist practices of comparison and positioning (Buchner, 2022b). In conclusion, this *mode of ablement*, meaning the acquisition of abilities and the ability to act generated by them, occurs not “naturally”, but through coercion, selection and de-/privileging. However, an ableism-critical perspective as outlined earlier not only focuses on the exclusionary aspects of these processes, but also asks *how processes of enabling can be organized and practiced differently*, in a more socially just form (Buchner, 2022b).

Following the perspective outlined earlier, school can be understood as a central societal space of ablement. Referring to Foucault, ablement in schools is achieved by the transmission of knowledge and the acquisition of specific abilities considered relevant, safeguarded by disciplinary technologies (Foucault, 1975). Thus, students are assessed in relation to specific ability

expectations, divided, and positioned into ranks referring to a scale of marks. Therefore, ability can be considered the key gatekeeping category for access to differently modulated educational spaces, and crucial for possibilities for social participation after school. Historically, the diagnosis of a *disability* and the associated labeling of “special educational needs” (SEN) automatically led to placement in the segregated spheres of special schools in German-speaking countries. Access to the spaces of mainstream schools and the modes of ablement within these schools were granted only after a long period of struggle and protest by the disabled people’s movement and its allies. Inclusive education rejects traditional educational modes of ablement and instead strives for an individualized, differentiated ablement of heterogeneous groups in a common place—as is also intended for teaching in the new middle school.

In the following, we employ this theoretical perspective, merging spatial theory and the critique of ableism, for an interrogation of teaching practices occurring at new middle schools (NMS) in Vienna. In doing so, we ask to what extent teaching practices produce educational spaces that enable all students in an individualized way, or whether traditional practices of “doing ability” continue to shape the educational spaces under the surface of the new school form of NMS. As we argue, educational practices always go hand in hand with ability-related placing and synthesizing, producing what have been termed “ability-space regimes” (Buchner, 2021). Following this line of thought, *who* is placed *where* can be reconstructed on the basis of ability expectation(s) and the qualities that specific arrangements of subjects, things, and educational practices exhibit. Do such practices create spaces of more just ablement or spaces of exclusion? As a result, teaching environments can be examined to determine the extent to which they avoid ability grouping, as prescribed by the NMS policy. In the next section, we reconstruct the interplay of space and ability in an “integration class” of an NMS in Vienna by analyzing empirical material, employing the theoretical framework elaborated upon previously. Our attention thus focuses on the placing of students and artifacts in the school, the modes of ablement, the spaces and atmospheres created through them, and the related synthesizing practices of students.

### **Researching space and ability in school: Methodological aspects**

In our analysis, we refer to data produced in the IBIRUZ project (2018–22). The project aimed to reconstruct the interplay of space, difference, and inclusive education from a longitudinal perspective. In the course of this explorative research, the initially broad focus condensed and the analysis of spatialized practices in relation to ability moved to the center of interest. An ethnographic multi-case study design was chosen for analysis (Bollig et al., 2016), with cases representing differing ability-space regimes (Buchner, 2021). Thus, we refer to an ethnographic approach understood as a “methodological plural contextual research strategy” (Breidenstein et al., 2013, authors’ translation) that helps to discover new and unknown things about society. For our research,

this meant exploring the spatial constructions in relation to ability that take place during lessons in NMS.

In the first phase of research, comprehensive ethnographic lesson observations were conducted over a period of 6–8 weeks in the spring of 2018 at “integration classes” of NMS in Vienna. Five classes from three different NMS were studied during this period of fieldwork. Afterward, further research was conducted at two selected schools at intervals of approximately one year. Participant observation stood at the core of the empirical analysis. In addition, problem-centered interviews with teachers and students were conducted. In total, 279 observation lesson protocols were produced, and 73 interviews with students and 22 interviews with teachers facilitated. This research was conducted by the authors of this text as well as master’s and bachelor’s students of educational science at the University of Vienna.

By design, diverse data material was generated and analyzed as part of an ongoing process during the course of this research. Hypotheses were developed in a reflexive interplay of theory and empiricism, deepened and, if necessary, discarded or adapted in the course of data collection. In the process—in the sense of theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 2010)—focal points were set that were deemed meaningful, e.g., the spatial constructions in certain school subjects or also ability-oriented practices in specific instructional settings. In this way, different readings of the meanings of ability for space and vice versa were generated. We followed the aim of giving validity to the different perspectives inscribed in the data material in order to relate data and to link interpretations. With regard to the multi-case study design pursued in IBIRUZ, this meant deepening the developing analytical concepts on a case-by-case basis and, at the same time, systematically contrasting them successively with other cases (Bollig & Kelle, 2012).

Next, we present a case study that illustrates a *specific interweaving of ability and space*. This case study consists of sequences from observation protocols and interviews, conducted in a fifth-grade “integration class” at Inessa Armand School.<sup>2</sup>

### **Ethnographic case study: The ability-space regime of Inessa Armand School**

Inessa Armand School is located on the outskirts of Vienna and is considered one of the “flagship schools” of the educational region in the context of inclusive education. The school has been committed to inclusive education for more than 20 years, as the principal proudly stated when we first met to discuss the project. We learned during the course of the conversation that teaching at the school is based on concepts of progressive education (*Reformpädagogik*), including elements of Montessori’s and Freinet’s pedagogy as well as individualized, weekly plan-based learning. According to the principal but also the teachers, the school is characterized by differentiated, student-centered teaching that aims to support the development of pupils in

the best possible way. Thus, the school seems to have implemented the aims of the NMS policy rather precisely. Furthermore, the high degree of participation of the students in school life was often emphasized in field conversations with the teachers. Students are involved in the design of the school's spaces, including the schoolyard, which seems to mirror the design of some of the interior walls. For example, a large graffiti mural adorns the corridors of the first floor, but also other forms of paintings, e.g., a series of pictures in which students have portrayed their favorite sneakers.

The "integration class" that is the focus of this ethnographic case study caters for 18 students, 3 of whom are classified as having SEN. The yellow walls of the classroom are decorated with pictures of the students. The desks and chairs are arranged in groups; the colorful cupboards and blue floor create a spectrum that shines in good weather due to the large windows. The positioning of goods seems to indicate a pedagogical routine that is characterized by various forms of open learning, especially cooperative learning in groups. Indeed, such spatialized practices of collaborative learning could be observed in some lessons—namely subsidiary subjects (e.g., art, geography, music). In what follows, we start our course of inquiry with the educational settings in these subsidiary subjects.

*A space within a space: The micro-spaces of support during subsidiary subjects*

During subsidiary subject lessons, all students are taught together in the classroom, usually by two teachers (a subject teacher and the so-called special education teacher, Mrs. Ford). During these lessons, varied pedagogical practices can be identified across all subjects, ranging from an inquiry-based teaching, to teacher-centered instruction, to group- and project-based learning. Thus, the educational spaces of the subsidiary subjects are characterized by a certain variety of teaching and learning formats, through which all of the students in the class are addressed and seemingly enabled to participate. Notably, the special education teacher, Mrs. Ford, rarely engages in active shaping or moderation of the lessons; rather, she limits herself to an assisting role, while the subject teacher leads the instruction. In these settings, Mrs. Ford places herself in the immediate vicinity of three students labeled as having special educational needs (SEN), named Joran, Florian, and Louis: sometimes she sits on a chair next to them, sometimes she leans against the wall behind them. The special education teacher explains content to them in a whisper and gives further assistance.

In sum, during subsidiary subject lessons, there seems to be no ability grouping in the strict sense of the concept, as all students are present in the same place and are taught together. However, differentiated or individualized teaching hardly takes place in the lessons observed, which seems to create the need of a "micro-space" of support. This space is formed by positioning practices of the special education teacher Mrs. Ford, the students labeled as having

SEN, and the support practices performed in a whisper, which become possible due to the close placing of actors. However, this space differs from the learning spaces of other students, as they do not have an adult performing support practices “close by”. Thus, *the micro-space of support can be considered a space within a greater, differently structured space*. As we will show, the inherent logic for the mode of construction of spaces could be reconstructed during main subject lessons as well, but manifesting in differing, “stricter” spatialized practices. Indeed, in German, English, and Mathematics, spatialized subdivision practices could be identified, in which—unlike in the subsidiary subjects—groups of students were formed and distributed to different places (break room, classroom, corridor, and art supply room). These practices of division are particularly pronounced in mathematics. Therefore, we draw our attention to the educational spaces of mathematics in these four places in the next section.

*In the spheres of the grammar school: The break room as space of drill and elitism*

The break room is usually used as a common room for breaks and free periods by the teachers. At the back of the room is a hallstand; next to it, four tables and chairs are arranged in a seating area, a space that is used exclusively by teachers. However, in some lessons, the break room is also used for Mr. Obermüller’s mathematics lessons. In this scenario, only the front part of the room is used: a total of six students sit at three tables that are offset from each other in front of a blackboard. Mr. Obermüller’s lessons can be described as an interplay of teacher-centered instruction and individual tasks for students that they complete during quiet time. His communication with the students is characterized by his rather dry teaching. As Mr. Obermüller explains, “his” students should learn to solve tasks independently and at a high level. In the phases of individual work, the students often gasp or even groan—also as a response to the prompting of the teacher. Thus, a tense atmosphere is often noticeable, which is also mirrored in the students’ emotions in the following sequence of a lesson protocol.

Then Mr. Obermüller asks the group [of students] why they are in this course. He does not give the children a chance to answer but answers the question himself: “because you are faster, think more and work more independently”. He walks up and down behind the students and counts on his fingers. With a rather stern and serious look on his face, he speaks in a low voice. Subsequently he says: “working independently / well” ... In between Samuel asks whether new students will be joining the group in the near future. The teacher explains that he does not know and that the “boundaries are very fluid”—it can happen at any time that someone from Mr. Reich’s group joins them, but also that someone from this group “doesn’t perform that well” and will be downgraded. I look



around and see that some students appear doubtful; Pascal raises his eyebrows, Dorina puts her elbows on the table, puts her head in her hands, looks at the teacher with wide eyes and then lets her head tilt forward towards the tabletop.

(IAS/17.05.18/MR; authors' translation)

As can be seen, the placing in the break room is related to the abilities of the students, whereby two groups are constructed in a homogenizing way: the mathematically “more able” (Mr. Obermüller’s group) and the “less able” (Mr. Reich’s group). Specific abilities are attributed to the students present, and at the same time, expectations of ability are imposed (working independently and quickly). Hence, the positioning of the students in the break room implies their placing in the upper rank of the hierarchy of mathematical abilities. However, by emphasizing the contingency of this positioning, a compulsion for the permanent display of abilities is revealed and deemed relevant. The resulting threatening connotation becomes clear in the reaction of the students addressed.

The educational space of Mr. Obermüller’s math lessons could be described as structured by practices of drilling but also of elitism, which evoke an atmosphere of intimidation from time to time. In this space, ablement is facilitated by indoctrination and fear, with Mr. Obermüller incorporating the position of the powerful, distanced judge of the performances of ability. Within these lessons, no individualization of learning could be observed (as all must work through the same exercises or are subject to lecturing); rather, the students are addressed *as individually responsible for their performance* and their placing in relation to it. This ability-based sorting can be read as being linked to a curricular order. As Mr. Obermüller explains in an interview, not without pride, he “has the grammar school children” and therefore confronts “his” students with more complex tasks and level requirements as compared to Mr. Reich’s students. These are, as he elaborates, instructed in line with the curriculum of the secondary modern school (which, at this point of time had already been replaced with the curriculum of the new middle school).

*“Mr. Reich’s group is not that good”: The classroom as space of the “Not that able”*

In Mr. Reich’s mathematics lessons, the classroom seems almost deserted compared to those of the subsidiary subject lessons. Only 7–9 students sit spread out over the table groups—whereby, in contrast to the educational practices otherwise pursued in this place, the room is not used for group work or peer learning. Thus, Mr. Reich uses methods similar to Mr. Obermüller’s. However, in contrast to the practices occurring within the break room, during lecturing phases Mr. Reich seems to make an effort to link his explanations as much as possible to the everyday knowledge of the young people or to explain with the help of common objects, e.g., when he demonstrates how to measure the circumference of a rectangle using a snack box. Mr. Reich often cracks

jokes and emphasizes to students (and also to us observers) that he wants to “teach in a relaxed way”. During the individual work phases, the students do exercises as prescribed in the weekly plan. Interestingly, this plan lists the tasks for all students from all groups, but those for Mr. Obermüller’s group are marked with an asterisk. Mr. Reich is appreciated among the students for his jovial manner. When students work on tasks according to their weekly plan, he deals with the students’ questions individually, trying to address the young people in a friendly manner. However, in some sequences of lessons observed, the students are addressed in a different way, referring to their academic abilities. For example, when the teacher complains that the students obviously did not learn what they should have been learning in primary school. Such addressing also takes place during conversations between the teacher and the ethnographer during lessons, which can be clearly heard by students in close proximity, as documented in the following sequence of an ethnographic protocol.

The teacher props his hands on the table and says to me that it is not normal that they [the students] take that long. As he explains, the exercises actually need to be considered a repetition of topics from primary school, but for the children it is not repetition because they have never learned them before. He states that this is terrible. While he does not wish to disavow the primary school in question, what did not go well there, they can hardly “repair” here.

(IAS/16.05.18/AK; authors’ translation)

As in other scenes observed, the level of mathematical abilities of students is homogenized and categorized as “not normal” and dramatized (“This is terrible, terrible!”). Primary school is synthesized as a space that lacked or lacks “proper ablement”, which is why all students in the classroom are thought of as having a learning deficit that cannot be “repaired”. In other passages of the protocol, Mr. Reich points out that Mr. Obermüller’s group would work on much more difficult tasks. In this way, the students are interpellated as “not that able”, as opposed to the group in the break room. As the following sequence of an interview transcript shows, the spatialized construction of ability-related groups is also inscribed in the subjectivities of young people populating these spaces.

*Interviewer:* Okay. I’ve seen that you are also divided in math. How does that work?

*Miriam:* Well, not all of us were very good at math and that’s why we now have the Mr. Reich group, which is not that good. I’m in it too, but we still have to practice a bit more for Mr. Obermüller, but those in Obermüller’s are quite good and that’s why they are now with Mr. Obermüller. (Miriam, 247–252; authors’ translation)

In this sequence, the student Miriam constructs the mathematical abilities of students in the group of Mr. Reich as “not that good”, relating these abilities to those in Mr. Obermüller’s group. The ability-related, spatialized-personalized placing (“those in Obermüller’s [class]”) are thereby seemingly considered self-evident or logical and are connected with a self-positioning in the ability-related hierarchy. Thus, the classroom, populated by the “Mr. Reich group”, is synthesized into the *space of the not (that) able*, incorporating this construction.

In conclusion, within Mr. Reich’s mathematics lessons, educational spaces are created that are predominantly characterized by a cheerful atmosphere and a “relaxed way of teaching”. The teacher presents himself as caring about the ablement of young people but is also concerned about their lack of abilities—and the latter aspect is interwoven with hierarchizing interpellations of “his” students. Thus, the spaces of mathematics instruction in the classroom are marked by an ambivalence that is composed of *encouraging practices of support and care as well as inscribing a deficient self-conception into students’ subjectivities*.

However, in addition to the reconstructed dichotomy (Mr. Reich’s group of the “not that able” vs. Mr. Obermüller’s group of the “very able”), the spatial order of mathematics lessons is linked to further ability-based spatial constructions. This is the case for four students—Ben, Louis, Joran, and Florian—who are regularly taught outside the classroom by Mrs. Ford. Only a few times, Ben and Louis, supported by the special needs teacher, participate in the initial sequences of the lessons in the classroom, and then leave the classroom as the lesson progresses. When asked, teachers explain this practice with the need for quiescence of both students and the high complexity of demands, as well as the possible, tailor-made support for the students “outside” in the corridor.

*Outside the “regular” spaces of ablement: The corridor as the cheerful territory of SEN*

The learning area in the corridor is located on an outside wall of the classroom. Three tables are positioned directly against this wall, with two chairs at each table. According to the arrangement, the students sit with their backs to the corridor, so that all they can see in front of them is the wall. There is no blackboard or flipchart in this learning area, which is criticized various times by Mrs. Ford in front of us ethnographers. Relatively often, some students from other classes pass by, which attracts the attention of the students placed at the tables—as does the collective leaving of classrooms by students from neighboring classrooms:

The students from the neighboring classroom rush into the corridor and line up in a row of two behind me, which significantly increases the noise level around us.

(IAS/18.05.18/MH; authors’ translation)

It becomes clear that the corridor arrangement can be read as an *atypical learning space*. After all, it differs from the classroom and the break room in terms of furniture and background noise, which seems surprising in view of the arguments mentioned above by teachers for placing Ben and Louis in this area of the school building (need for quiescence, individualized support). Rather, due to its reduced furniture and the sometimes rather high level of noise, the area has disabling effects on learning processes rather than supporting learning. Furthermore, due to their placing, students are always exposed to the gaze of peers from other classes, underlining the irregular positioning of Ben, Louis, Joran, and Florian and potentially facilitating their marginalization. Finally, the placing of the students seems to be guided by a logic which is indicated by specific labeling practices: Joran, Florian, and Louis are addressed as “SEN students” by the teaching staff, referring to students’ institutionally certified “special needs”. Beyond this homogeneous variant, more differentiated interpellations could be observed in the field. More precisely, Joran and Florian were addressed as students with a high level of support needs<sup>3</sup> (“SEF students”) by the teaching staff, referring to a specific curriculum for a specific group of students with SEN (those considered as having a high level of support needs). Another nuance is reflected in the explanations of some teachers, elaborating that Louis is taught according to the curriculum of the so-called general special school (*Allgemeine Sonderschule*), a curriculum intended to cater for students with “mild cognitive disabilities”. Ben, who is rarely a “guest” in the corridor, was recurrently labeled an “ADHD child”; but, as emphasized by teachers, without having SEN. Thus, in contrast to the “grammar school children” in the break room and those students taught in the classroom according to the “modern general secondary school”, the arrangement in the corridor, including the responsibility of the special education teacher Mrs. Ford, mark *a territory of special education, which is established through positioning in relation to curriculum, ability, and profession*. But what kind of educational spaces emerge in this constellation?

Interestingly, lessons in the corridor are characterized by a high density of interactions. Mrs. Ford always speaks in a calm voice, sometimes in a whisper. Even when the sometimes quick-tempered Ben repeatedly questions her competence as a teacher or the meaning of a task, she usually remains calm and friendly. Unlike with the other teachers, Joran, Florian, Louis, and Ben call Mrs. Ford by her first name. Moreover, Mrs. Ford occasionally engages in specific physical contact practices with Louis, such as stroking his hair or massaging his earlobes. Usually, a good mood floats through this learning area, and one can hear laughter and joking. In conclusion, one might say that atmospheres of cheerfulness and confidentiality are created in the corridor.

Unlike in the classroom or the break room, there is no distinct separation between lecture phases and work on the weekly plan in the corridor. Most often, a mode of teaching occurs in which Mrs. Ford explains learning content and immediately links it to tasks for the students. Sometimes she asks questions and immediately tells the students the answers. If one takes a closer look

at the placings in the arrangement described, it is noticeable that Mrs. Ford usually positions herself between two pairs of students: Joran and Florian on one side, Ben and Louis on the other. In the interactions, a pattern emerges in which Ben and Louis are usually addressed individually, while Florian and Joran are addressed together or “as a team”. This pattern seems to refer to a specific order, which is ultimately also symbolically reinforced by placing: according to this line of interpretation, Mrs. Ford becomes the personalized boundary marker between the *curriculum for students with intellectual disabilities and high support needs* and the *curriculum for students with learning disabilities*. These ability-related, spatialized subgroupings are underpinned by a dichotomy of ability expectations: Ben and Louis, as well as Joran and Florian, are each given the same tasks.

Accordingly, the territory of special needs education in the corridor is divided again into learning spaces for two groups of students, differing concerning their ascribed cognitive abilities. This division is connected to the respective learning horizons that are opened up for the students: “Mrs. Ford touches Louis ... briefly on his shoulder and says that ‘they in there’ [the classroom] are also doing the same thing” (IAS/18.05.18/MH). Hence, Louis and Ben receive references to the same content regarding the educational program both inside and outside the classroom. This proximity in terms of content is demonstrated by their occasional participation in mathematics lessons in the classroom. However, these temporary placings within the walls of the classroom always come with an “expiry date”. The same cannot be said for Joran and Florian, as *their position on the outside walls of the classroom seems to be “sticky”*. More than that, in a few lessons they are placed in an area further away, the art supply room, which is at the end of the corridor. Here, they receive specific support from Mrs. Huber.

### **The parallel universe at the end of the corridor: Teaching and learning in the art supply room**

The art supply room is equipped with numerous shelves stacked with board games, paints, brushes, canvases, colorful leaves, and many handicraft items and other utensils for art and craft lessons. A poster of an animal and pictures painted by students hang on the wall. The floor is blue tile, and the walls are painted a soft orange. At the end of the room is a round table where the teacher, Mrs. Huber, usually sits with Joran and Florian. In field conversations, Mrs. Huber explains that she acts as an additional special education teacher on an hourly basis to support the “most severely disabled” students at the school. Thus, the art supply room can be regarded as an *atypical learning space*—in terms of its actual functionality and the goods placed in it, as well as the subjects positioned in it. However, the lessons observed in this setting also differ from the other spaces discussed before, regarding the subject matter as well as ability expectations. Thus, while the mathematics lessons of the other students are dedicated to the calculation of rectangles, Joran and Florian deal with exercises on the number range up to 100.

Apparently, performances of specific abilities are tested in a playful way—as shown in the following excerpt from an observation protocol. In the course of this unit, the two students receive a sheet of paper on which a “table of hundreds” is drawn: a square table in which all the numbers from 1 to 100 are entered in small boxes. In the vertical column on the far right are the tens: 10, 20, 30, 40, and so on. Joran and Florian are instructed to use a red crayon to fill in the boxes in the column that represent increments of 10.

Florian asks Joran if he is already at 30. A few seconds later, whether he is at 40. I don't hear Joran's answer. He is now at 50, Florian announces. Is Joran already at 60, he wants to know. “Joran is also fast today”, Mrs. Huber notes. The students draw eagerly, one can hear the pens moving quickly across the paper. Florian says 90, Joran says 90. Today they are equally fast, says the teacher. Florian announces that he is finished, drops the pencil and leans back in his chair. Joran has also finished and shakes his hand. Exactly, they should shake hands, advises Mrs. Huber. Four hands are shaken ... Now the students are told to check if their pencils are well-sharpened. If not, then they should do it now. Florian turns the sharpener while holding the pencil still. He should wait until Joran has also finished sharpening, the teacher instructs him. She turns to Joran and praises him for being so good at sharpening.

(IAS/17.05.18/AK; authors' translation)

In this sequence, the subject matter at the core of the lesson, the acquisition of the number range up to 100, is interwoven with a fine motor skills exercise. The encouragement to shake hands frames the accomplishment of the task as particularly physically challenging and, at the same time, can be considered infantilizing. Subsequently, the special needs teacher makes a further demand on the students: the proper sharpening of their pencils, an exercise that mutates into a central learning requirement, as Mrs. Huber highlights the importance of being able to sharpen a pencil in several other scenes of the lesson protocol repeatedly. In this way, the art supply room is constructed as something like a “feel-good zone”, as Joran as well as Florian can meet all the learning goals, are praised for their achievements, and also seem to have fun. This structure of the space is generated by reduced ability expectations in form of coloring boxes as well as pencil sharpening, abilities that were not made relevant by teachers in any of the other lessons observed. Thus, the art supply room turns into something like a peculiar parallel universe, as this lesson has—apart from the label of “mathematics education”—little to do with the requirements. Indeed, the art supply room is characterized as a space where the modes of subjectivation seen in the educational spaces before are abandoned and replaced by other ability expectations. However, the prioritizing of these abilities might be explained with the curriculum for students with high support needs, as fine motor skills and practical life skills are explicitly listed as elements of ablement herein (BMBF, 2015c).

In sum, the educational space constructed within the walls of the art supply room offers no possibility for acquiring new abilities or deepening abilities already at hand, but at most a repetition of what has already been acquired. Thus, the positioning in the supply space and the linked practices promote ability-related hierarchies between students of the class. Despite being unable to develop abilities that are relevant in other areas examined previously, Joran and Florian are subjected to a programme that tends to put them at a disadvantage, in terms of both content and location, as it is situated at the farthest end of the educational spectrum. The “ability gap”, to the other groups of students, is not reduced by the program in the art supply room, but consolidated and expanded.

### **The spaces of curricula: Mathematics teaching as a curriculum-based cascade of ability-expectations**

As shown, teaching practices in the so-called “integration class” generate a *specific spatial order that is related to school subjects and ability expectations*. In the subsidiary subjects, all students of the class are placed in one area, mostly the classroom, and addressed through a variety of teaching methods. However, as there is hardly any differentiation in these lessons, *micro-spaces of support* need to be formed, in which the special needs teacher can do the actual differentiation work by being positioned close to the pupils. In the context of the main subjects, however, this arrangement is modified, which was examined in greater detail with a focus on mathematics lessons. These lessons are structured by strict placings that are related to ability and curriculum. In this way, the ability-based placings of students and the specific addressing as well as educational practices of the assigned teachers in different places create *spaces of curricula*, which are characterized by specific atmospheres.

The spaces of mathematics lessons reproduce a binary, ableist structure, which is differentiated by further ability-related divisions above and below the “great divide”. As shown, ability-related boundaries run between the break room and classroom on the one hand, and the corridor and art supply room on the other. The latter spaces become what we have called *territories of special education*, characterized by a joyful atmosphere, patience, specific care-practices, and significantly reduced ability expectations. These spaces are inhabited by students deemed unable to meet ‘normal’ ability expectations of schooling, as indicated by curriculum-related categorizations, which function as intuitional markers of difference. However, *this area below the “great divide” proves to have a specific fluidity*. As mentioned, Louis and Ben become what could be termed “border crossers”, sometimes being “allowed” to stay temporarily “inside” of the classroom, as long as their abilities are deemed sufficient to follow Mr. Reich’s mathematics lessons. If not, the boundaries harden again. For Joran and Florian, such excursions into the “zones of normal education” are obviously not planned; they remain permanently placed outside the mathematics classroom. However, these placings seem to be somewhat fluid as well.

Indeed, the two pupils are often merged into a block of “SEF students” by corresponding addressing and are transferred into a specifically connoted educational space, characterized by reduced ability expectations: the art supply room, a space characterized by ability expectations in relation to the curriculum of students with high support needs. Overall, the positioning below the “great divide”—which in the case of mathematics lessons also manifests spatially—has a disabling effect on students. Their placing in the corridor goes hand in hand with unfavorable conditions for ablement due to the lower equipment and noise level, which is apparently accepted by teachers, as is the perpetuation of the ability gap through distance from the actual subject matter as well as the infantilizing practices in the art supply room.

The spheres above the “ableist divide” also show an entanglement of space, curricula, and ability expectations. In this regime, the break room becomes the space of the “grammar school students”, and the classroom the space of the lower-ranked “modern secondary education” students, structuring the ability-related, hierarchized landscape above the “great divide”. The permanent possibility of up- and downgrading between the groups creates pressure on the students positioned in the break room, which is increased by drilling and the demand for fast, independent learning. The latter abilities seem to be decisive parameters for placement in the Obermüller or the Reich group. In the ostensibly “relaxed” atmosphere of Mr. Reich’s classroom, the young people receive praise and assistance—while at the same time incorporating an understanding of themselves as “less able”. Thus, the ability-space regime of mathematics lessons reconstructed can also be described as *a cascade of ability expectations*.

Finally, with reference to the intentions of the NMS educational reform, it can be concluded that in our case study, one of the main aims of cooperative, NMS reform teaching to perform a variety of methods of open learning is implemented in the subsidiary subjects. However, for those students who cannot meet the embedded ability expectations of lessons, individualization needs to be performed by the special education teacher through positioning and support practices that tend to highlight differences—as all other students seem to be collectively exposed to the same teaching. In the main subjects, traditional forms of spatialized “ability grouping” dominate, shaped by persistent categorizations and atmospheres of fear. Interestingly, in our case, more teachers do not ultimately serve the intended aim of team teaching, but rather the creation of curricular-oriented, ability-related spaces. Thus, four curricular spaces are constructed during mathematics lessons: the spaces of the curriculum of the grammar school, of modern secondary education school, of students with a high level of support needs, and of the so-called general special school—all curricular spaces seem to coexist under the umbrella of the new middle school. These local implementations of the NMS reform ultimately point to *the path of dependency and the interlinked persistence of the ableist grammar of Austrian schooling*. Hence, the historically grown structures of a three-part education system have a strong influence on the formation of educational



spaces of the new middle school. The marking of students as “not normal” via the classification as having SEN, which has not been left untouched by the NMS reform, and the associated coexistence of old and new curricula, ultimately manifests itself in corresponding *ability-based, spatialized arrangements in the mainstream school*. This focus on the intertwining of space, ability, and curriculum exposes the inertia of educational reforms and the frictions of their local translation.

The heuristic approach of relating spatial theory with an ableism-critical perspective proves to be a productive matrix for research on teaching and learning, especially in relation to the (re)production of social inequality. As shown, under the surface of the NMS school reform, *traditional processes of the production of social inequality qua ability expectations are prolonged*. With an ethnographic case study, it was possible to empirically realize the claim formulated in the literature of disability studies using ableism as a profitable theoretical foil that goes beyond the investigation of the construction of dis/ability (e.g., Wolbring, 2012). As shown, the terrors of ability expectations affect all subjects of schooling, but in differing ways and to varying degrees of disadvantage and exclusion. The results obtained point to a *spatialized order of abilities*, which produces not only territories of special and “regular” education, but also further ability-related, differentiated areas. Accordingly, it becomes apparent that ability expectations are used not only for the construction of not/normal or dis/abled, but generally for a *hierarchized and also spatialized sorting of students*. Therefore, the investigation of the interplay between space and ability can also be considered a promising theoretical tool for researching other educational areas.

## Notes

- 1 Some parts of this chapter are based on an article published in the German journal *Tertium Comparationis* (Buchner & Petrik, 2022). We would like to thank the editors of *Tertium Comparationis* for the permission to translate these parts.
- 2 The names of schools, students, and teachers are pseudonyms.
- 3 This category subsumes students who would be, referring to international classification systems, labeled as having intellectual disabilities.

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# 5 Inclusive research, in-/exclusion, and ethics

After the spatial turn(s)

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## Introduction

In this chapter, I adopt the stance that space merits exploration in thinking about inclusive (participatory) research and inclusive education and their ethical dimensions. In discussions of inclusive research, frequently conceptualized as participatory research, the ethical dimension is often foregrounded. The decision to conduct research *with* (as opposed to *on*) the people the research is about almost always has an ethical dimension and reflects the idea that this is *the right thing to do* (Holland et al., 2008). Inclusive researchers place strong value on the ethical principles of beneficence—attending to well-being and the doing of good, and of justice—fair distribution of the benefits of research (cf. Williams, 2021). It is less common for them to consider in any explicit way the spatial implications of inclusive research, or to use the term preferred by Nind and Vinha (2014), of doing research inclusively.

In discussions of inclusion and exclusion in education, attention often becomes focused on place and the in/out binary. Efforts have been made to progress the debate from a focus on whether the child or young person is inside/outside the ordinary school or classroom to focus on the quality of their participation and learning experience (Florian & Beaton, 2018). This is a recognition that inclusion is about the nature of the educational space. Space is socially produced, dynamic (Lupton, 2009), performing the power relations and identities of those who occupy, appropriate, and construct it (Gregson & Rose, 2000). As Hemingway and Armstrong (2012) explain, using the work of Massey (1994), spaces are the product of social relations and material social practices such that education (as all of society) is constructed spatially. They note that “‘space’ and ‘place’ are used as metaphors for understandings and practices relating to belonging and not belonging, inclusion and exclusion” (p. 480). Thus, as Gulson and Symes (2007) argue, while education as spatial practice is underexplored conceptually, the whole language of educational inclusion is spatial: in, out, margin, heart, and so on. I use spatial metaphors as well as spatial concepts in the chapter, as I examine both school and research practices.

This chapter examines the ways in which researchers enter schools and classrooms and engage with their spatial-temporal dimensions, implicitly or explicitly protecting, reinforcing, or disrupting the power those schools and classrooms exercise through surveillance and governance (Cobb et al., 2005). This builds on the Foucauldian idea that power is exercised through manifold and often subtle ways in the regulatory regime of the school/classroom that serves to privilege normative behavior. I explore the implications of researchers' engagement with children/young people (and their teachers) as they negotiate ways of researching together for understanding in-/exclusion. Using examples from my own and others' research, I examine how the spatial dynamic can be changed by adopting an insider or alongsider stance, altering the perspective and bringing different ways of knowing closer together and into dialogue.

### **Space and inclusion in education**

In some discourses, schools and classrooms are containers in which children and young people are placed to learn. Here, the in-/exclusion dimension is about whether children are placed in the same containers and expected to learn together (or at the very least alongside each other), or in separate containers where they are deemed to learn more effectively. There may be some attention to the architecture of those containers—the layouts of classrooms—but the spatial understanding is relatively unsophisticated. The emphasis is more on place as a physical entity than on space as the social use of place. After the spatial turn (Gulson & Symes, 2007), or turns, space has become understood as the interplay of objects, structures, and actions, and spatial arrangements understood as socially produced in relation to physical entities (Löw, 2001). The school and classroom containers become concrete representations of social relations (Soja, 1996). Once we conceptualize space as a hybrid or synthesis of physical and social space, space is critical in the in-/exclusion of learners and places are no longer innocent or asocial.

Separate schools for some children, away from their families and local communities, have become less acceptable against the ethical landscape, in which the damage caused by segregation has been recognized (Rieser & Mason, 1990; Tomlinson, 2017). To avoid this, some special and mainstream schools in the UK were co-located to ease and encourage the crossing of borders by students between school types (Griffiths, 2015). While disabled learners have had greater access to mainstream spaces, their exclusion may have merely changed in scope. Rather than experiencing physical exclusion from the setting, they experience micro exclusions within the fabric of the school as liminal spaces are constructed and often labeled as therapeutic (Atkinson & Robson, 2012; Buchner, 2017; Köpfer et al., 2020). Inclusion as an ethical and spatial project has become more nuanced as the concept of spatial justice (Dunne et al., 2018) has been invoked. Moreover, the affective dimension of school spaces has been illustrated by those, such as Youdell and Armstrong (2011) and Wolfe (2017), taking a new materialist approach and highlighting how

spaces are experienced and felt in interaction with “questions of boundary connectivity, interiority, and exteriority” (Wolfe, 2017, p. 65).

Researchers have illuminated the importance of space for in-/exclusion. For example, in their analysis of everyday life in schools, Holland et al. (2007, p. 221) argue that space “is not merely a backdrop to activities that take place, it also shapes processes and activities, and spatial relations are simultaneously temporal”. Through her research in Italian secondary schools, D’Alessio (2012) has drawn attention to how school spaces produce insiders and outsiders, sometimes in barely detectable spatializing practices in which “invisible walls” (p. 526) are built between disabled and nondisabled students, used to control and regulate diversity. In this way, physical and social space work together to naturalize school hierarchies and perpetuate the interests of the dominant groups. In my own work, in ethnographic case studies of young children moving between different kinds of early childhood special and inclusive settings with their distinct spatial practices (Nind et al., 2010, 2011), we saw how occupying each space led to different social constructions of the children, offering different potentials for what they could do and be.

As colleagues and I have argued elsewhere, “For teachers and other adults in schools, the production and appropriation of space is a habitual, reciprocal process, influencing and producing physical space while simultaneously being influenced by prefigured space” (Nind et al., 2022). Spaces are never innocent, and they and the people in them are enacting multiple agendas. Children and young people have their own agency, constructing and working within and against prefigured spaces. They also have a strong sense of whether they belong in particular school spaces and of their purpose and status within them (Cresswell, 1996). While “subject positions” may be “prescribed and proscribed” and “differentially available” (Benjamin et al., 2003, p. 549) to children in different spaces, children are “actively negotiating their positions, moment-by-moment” (Nind et al., 2010, p. 667). They work at being accepted and at constructing their identities for particular spaces (Saraví et al., 2020), not least because experience of space is felt on a physical level (Hackett et al., 2018), and belonging is a fundamental human desire (Antonsich, 2010). While I use spatial metaphors in the chapter and sometimes treat space as a representation of power, it is also useful to see space as tangible and dynamic and as “lived” (Lefebvre, 1991). In this way, school and research sites are “not passive, but places of embodied and emotive assemblage” (Wolfe, 2017, p. 66). This follows the idea that “Space is defined by (shifting) boundaries and exclusions” and that “Place, as a space, is a fluxing assemblage of affective matter and force” (Wolfe, 2017, p. 67).

### **Space and inclusion in research**

In much research, teachers and learners are the objects of research, and their role in the research is clearly defined: they are providers of (or vehicles to) data. In this respect, the worlds of the researcher and researched are separate,

they occupy distinct spaces. This separation becomes less distinct in many research approaches, however, with qualitative researchers seeking “to ‘ground’ studies in the experience and views of respondents” (Kiernan, 1999, p. 43), which, if not quite walking in their shoes, implies getting close to where they walk. Ethnographers, particularly those doing “at home” ethnography (Alvesson, 2009), work as insiders, spending time inside the cultural worlds of participants sharing at least some of their experiences (Frank, 2012). In participatory action research, academics and grassroots activists share an entangled space of research and action (Griffiths, 2009).

In education, the space one occupies connects with the stigma or sense of belonging one has, the resources that come with that space, and the power it is possible to wield. These dimensions, particularly of rightful belonging and power over knowledge, have underpinned interest in participatory and emancipatory research as part of a wider democratization of research. The term “inclusive research” has been used to encompass a range of such approaches (Nind, 2014; Walmsley & Johnson, 2003). In inclusive research, the aim is do more than observe the ethical principles of doing no harm and supporting the autonomous decision-making of participants; the ethical principles of beneficence and justice are foremost. This means not just documenting or mapping the “exclusionary landscape”, but doing something to change it (Kitchin & Hubbard, 1999, p. 195, as cited in van Blerk & Ansell, 2007, p. 314). It means recognizing children’s right to make choices, express opinions, be heard, and be treated fairly (Taylor & Smith, 2009, as cited in Green, 2015). Children’s involvement as active researchers reflects these ethical concerns with their right to “participate in matters of relevance to them” (Barratt Hacking et al., 2013, p. 438, as cited in Green, 2015, p. 208). This is a matter of appreciating the standpoint of children who are marginalized in the power relations of schooling. As Thomson and Gunter (2007, p. 329) argue, “Students-as-researchers are not pure in voice, but bring to their projects their experiences, their beliefs, and their emotions, and these shape and frame what knowledge can be produced in their research”.

Inclusive research takes researchers into risky spaces, as the rules of engagement are not fixed. This might explain why there is a clamoring to set a gold standard of what makes research “truly” participatory or inclusive (cf. Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008; Nind & Vinha, 2014). Academic researchers experience a loss of control in research spaces where the process of decision-making is opened up (Green, 2015), although they often retain the option to close it down again (Thomson, 2007). Armstrong and Collis (2014), while operating as activist and practical policy researchers, depicted strong connections between research roles and spaces when they distinguished three types of space. From an academic researcher perspective, this would be: (i) “My space”, in which academics involve “users”, inviting nonacademic collaborators into the university to research with them; (ii) “Your space”, in which activists involve academics, inviting them into their domain to collaborate with them; and (iii) “New space” that people create for working together. The new space is in

neither's physical territory to help facilitate a coming together to work in new ways unfamiliar to all. New spaces are, in theory, not prefigured by those inside or outside the academy. They offer "different ways of seeing" (Cook, 2012, p. 16) or a "third space of understanding" (Hall, 2014, p. 384) (see Seale et al., 2015, for a fuller discussion).

Mostly, inclusive research is regarded as an ethical project that is about ownership, power, control, rights, adding value, and producing better knowledge (Nind, 2014). I argue that spatial theory is helpful in thinking about and doing research inclusively because research spaces are tied up with social (in) justice (Lefebvre, 1991). Holland et al. (2007, p. 223) use "the concept of 'spatial praxis' to refer to action and practice that can be habitual, as well as reflective and creative". Moreover, the idea that "there is no a-spatial or a-political space" (Dunne et al., 2018, p. 23) applies to research as much as it does to education.

Next, I will address four key questions that arise in looking at inclusive research and ethics as spatial: *What is inclusive research creating space for? What space do I rightfully occupy? How do I appropriate and enter new spaces? What spaces can we create together with new affordances and new rules of engagement?* In weaving my way through these interrelated questions, I draw on a mix of space theories, like a bricoleur using various spatial ideas available to me following the spatial turns and mixing them with ideas about inclusive research to create something new and inevitably unfinished and untidy.

#### *What is inclusive research creating space for?*

Much of the literature on participatory research with children and young people focuses on creating age or culturally appropriate spaces (or spatial practices) in which to listen to and with them (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015; Dalli & Te One, 2012), and in which to recognize "children as collaborators in building understandings about interaction where adult and child spaces meet" (Cook & Hess, 2007, p. 30). This may manifest as fun spaces for children to express themselves, engage with ideas, conduct research (Cook & Hess, 2007; Kellett et al., 2010), and even make impact (Messiou, 2012; van Blerk & Ansell, 2007). Often in these types of constructions of inclusive research, the "my space" of the academic is made more playful as children and young people are allowed into research roles, or as researchers enter school classrooms. Participatory research with children is making space for hearing new voices and for seeing the research phenomenon from children's perspectives. Keeping it playful, though, may retain children's "subordinate positioning", where they are still acting according to school norms (Barratt Hacking et al., 2013). Gallacher and Gallagher (2008) present a critique of the idea of special, child-friendly research and maintain that in participatory research, children remain regulated. I am not arguing that inclusive/participatory research can make major changes in power relations in the face of institutional persistence; more that some of prefiguring of power structures and roles may



shift enough to open up cracks for knowledge production that is different from what it would have been without this.

While research does not have to be either serious or fun, the discourse of inclusive research with people with learning/intellectual disabilities is often quite different from that of participatory research with children, the former alluding to the serious business of people taking up their rightful place (a spatial concept) as producers of knowledge (Bigby et al., 2014). Here, the space is more heavily loaded with explicit values about the mantra of “nothing about us with us” and with issues of power writ large (Nind & Vinha, 2014). In this context, the new approach to research is making space not just for new voices, but for political action. Nonetheless, there are dangers associated with self-advocates seeking to enter academic spaces in that doing so might entail them mimicking academic research (Bigby et al., 2014, discussed by Williams, 2021) rather than creating research that is meaningful in other ways. The same could be said for child researchers.

Often inclusive researchers stress the opening up of spaces of choice—about how to be involved in the research and how to conduct it (cf. Thomas & O’Kane, 1998). Inclusive research creates options for what people who are usually subjects/objects of research can do in the research space. In working with girls with social, emotional, and behavioral difficulties who had been excluded from mainstream schools, we offered them a choice of options for utilizing digital technologies in finding ways for them to express themselves in the research (Nind et al., 2012). As they played with the options and their affordances for becoming engaged and for self-presentation, the girls endorsed “the importance of material space to concepts of belonging and identity” (Christensen et al., 2000, p. 153) in what they said, and they endorsed the importance of participatory methods space in how they communicated that message.

### *What space do I rightfully occupy?*

Researchers of in-/exclusion often need to negotiate access to school spaces, which may mean having to negotiate their way past adult and sometimes child (Holt, 2004) gatekeepers. A key question is who is eligible to be where and do what (Williams, 2021). One of the affordances of inclusive research is the access to people, places, and knowledge that it facilitates (Nind & Vinha, 2014). Participatory photography and associated methods give researchers insight into spaces of in-/exclusion from the child’s perspective, spaces that adults may be ineligible to enter. For example, Pascal and Bertram (2021, p. 21) advocate “listening to, and capturing, the experiences and perspectives of young children on the pandemic” as “congruent with our sense of an inclusive, democratic society which values solidarity and the right to be heard”. Yet they reflect on the need to protect the integrity of children’s storytelling (as their own spaces) and the unwillingness of researchers and practitioners to intrude, citing the example of one nursery group’s “death game”, in which the

children re-enact COVID-19 illness and death away from adults as “private sharing experience”.

When researching in-/exclusion, researchers seeking to understand children’s learning spaces need to approach them “carefully and respectfully” and, as part of a democratic process, to respond to children’s initiatives rather than impose on them (Mackey, 2012, p. 477, cited by Green, 2015, p. 222). The drive for participatory methods with children has incorporated methods in which children retain control of their spaces. This includes providing “child-led special place tours” (Green, 2013, p. 13), joining in “walking interviews” around their schools (Green, 2013), or taking photographs of aspects of school life that they associate with “friendships, relationships and wellbeing” (Allan & Jorgerson, 2021, p. 332), illustrating “what it is to be ‘included’ or ‘excluded’” (Dunne et al., 2018, p. 22). Shifting from their traditional positions as the object of others’ gaze to being behind the camera, enables child researchers, quite literally, a different point of view (Parsons et al., 2021). Involving children in asking “Whose space is this?” and “Who rightfully occupies this space?” is important because of the ways in which physical spaces interact with social capital, as Mazumdar et al. (2017) and Allan and Jorgerson (2021) argue in relation to in-/exclusion.

An alternative to researchers seeking to getting inside—or to recruiting insiders to—children’s spaces and perspectives, is to occupy an *alongsider* role. Carroll (2009) proposed the concept of “*alongsiders*” in the context of video-ethnography and video-reflexivity in research. It reflects her feminist research concern with being an agent of change and wanting to support the active participation of research participants. Her vehicle for this is “feeling alongside” and “looking alongside” (rather than at or through) participants. This would involve children and researchers aligning and sharing purpose as researchers stand alongside children (and teachers) in solidarity. Being alongside offers a different perspective. This is not the same as giving children (measured) access to the research spaces, dialogues, and decisions that are usually closed to them (Thomson & Gunter, 2007), or the reciprocity usually associated with the democratization of research, but it again illustrates that inclusive research (however it is realized, and however imperfect) has a spatial dimension.

### *How do I appropriate and enter new spaces?*

Inclusive research is not always about collaborating nicely together in each other’s spaces. Sometimes access to the research space is claimed rather than given (Thomson, 2007). Duncan (1996, p. 129, as cited in Holland et al., 2007, p. 224) conceptualizes space as “subject to various territorializing and deterritorializing processes whereby local control is fixed, claimed, challenged, forfeited and privatized”. Holland et al. (2007, p. 225) saw school staffrooms as places where “students are kept at bay, spatially, physically and aurally”. A research equivalent might be academic researchers, having collaborated in

the field, returning to their university offices to do data analysis in their private space (Nind, 2011). In schools, “Struggles about movement, time, voice and space abound, leeway is gained, small victories are won by students and contests erupt” (Holland et al., 2007, p. 227). Similarly, research is a site of contestation in which power relations are materially enacted. I recall that when we invited people with learning (intellectual) disabilities into our university to work with us within our carefully crafted rules of engagement, they wandered off to move around the buildings and campus, breaking free of constraints to explore the unfamiliar terrain (Nind & Seale, 2009). In this instance, “more direct modes of experience” (Cresswell, 2004, p. 7), sensory modes, were being used to comprehend this place of research and to appreciate the “taste and feel of inclusive research” (Trell & van Hoven, 2010, p. 91). As in walking interviews, the young people were interested in “physical experiences of place” (Trell & van Hoven, 2010, p. 95) taking the initiative to move our inclusive research in a new direction.

While various marginalized groups may not be waiting to be invited into inclusive research spaces, it is rare for children and young people to gate-crash their way into research. They are invited and trained as researchers, which may mean that the power within the research is disrupted only superficially. This makes it questionable as to what extent the research belongs to them and to what extent they belong in the research space. Inclusive research may be a new space, but it is one that is heavily prefigured, where children/disabled people continue to lack social capital and where the most marginal can remain so (Milner & Frawley, 2019). It is a bold inclusive research team that seeks to create new spaces that are not what Thomson (2007, p. 210, after Brock et al., 2001) calls “closed spaces” entered by invitation, but “claimed” or “created” spaces in which new power and possibilities are created.

*What spaces can we create together with new affordances and new rules of engagement?*

Milner and Frawley (2019, p. 385) describe inclusive research as a “shared space” for advancing “shared and distinct purposes” in which contributions have equal validity. They highlight making room for new processes and outcomes, which requires resisting acculturation to a pre-scripted paradigm. All too often, the marginalized groups involved in inclusive research are trained to take on the explicit and implicit rules and conventions of the academy. This, they argue, means the architecture of the space is all too familiar. This version of inclusive research involves assimilation as children/disabled people migrate from “incompetent” to “imperfect” knowers. The actors have agency, however, and we can conceptualize doing research inclusively as co-creating different kinds of messy, imperfect spaces (Milner & Frawley, 2019; Nind & Vinha, 2014; Thomson, 2007) that challenge the view of child/disabled researchers as other in a subtle reinscription of relational power (Milner & Frawley, 2019). We need to be aware of the likelihood “that ‘the ‘rules’” of this newer

epistemological dance have almost entirely been choreographed within the same institutions the proponents of Inclusive Research methods hold responsible for their original methodological subjugation” (Milner & Frawley, 2019, p. 392). Thus, it is important to ask which problematic practices and technologies we carry forward when “reproducing social spaces of more contemporary research encounters” (Milner & Frawley, 2019, p. 392).

Rather than presenting inclusive research as an ethical panacea for the ills of research, it is clear that the rules of engagement in the research space still need to be questioned by those of us seeking to do research inclusively. We need to be reflexive as we grapple with the ways in which we are historically and geographically situated (Gergen & Gergen, 2003). Just as researchers like Dunne et al. (2018) have sought to illuminate in-between-ness in relation to inclusive education and in-/exclusion, others (including Fine, 1994) have sought to identify the space between insider and outsider, emic and etic perspectives, in research. I maintain we need to understand that there are nuances between research as bad and good spaces. Dwyer and Buckle (2009, p. 60) refer to a third space—“a space of paradox, ambiguity, and ambivalence, as well as conjunction and disjunction”. This idea of third space is important for exploring what is possible when we consciously try to disrupt assumptions, practices, and power relations to create a hybrid space of reciprocal understanding (Hall, 2014; Nind et al., 2022; Seale et al., 2015).

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have argued that particular kinds of research—defined as inclusive or participatory—offer potential for creating new spaces with new affordances and new rules of engagement. I started with the question of what inclusive research is creating space for and circled back to this at the end. This chapter represents a struggle between form and content, with ideas not always suited to a linear narrative. Moreover, I have drawn on a mix of theoretical ideas about space and interwoven these with a deliberate playing with more everyday spatial metaphors. Ultimately, while I concur with Veck and Hall (2020, p. 1092) that we need to view “inclusive research in education as principally a matter of relations”, I argue that the spatial dimension is critical to these relations—the relationship between space and perspective. Inclusive research is an ethical project to “understand research as a dialogue [that] requires respecting each participant’s capacity for continuing change” (Frank, 2012, p. 37). More than anything else, it is empathetic, intersubjective space that we need to create when doing research inclusively.

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## 6 Inclusion, exclusion, and the spaces of practices

*Georg Rißler, Jürgen Budde, and Theodore Schatzki*

### Introduction

Theories of practices have made inroads into education science research, including into work on inclusion and exclusion in teaching and learning. At the same time, education research that draws on practice theories neglects theories and concepts of space and place, specifically, the spatial and placial forms and determinants of inclusion and exclusion in education. The purpose of this chapter is to show that attending to the spatial and placial features of bundles of practices and material arrangements can advance educational research on inclusion and exclusion. To support this thesis, the discussion first circumscribes theories of practices in general and describes their presence in educational research. It then explores three prominent treatments of space and place in the practice theoretical literature. The final section gives examples of spatial and placial dimensions and determinants of inclusion and exclusion in educational contexts, as conceptualized through one of the coauthor's account of practices.

### Theories of practices

Before showing that a practice theory approach that attends to the spatial and placial features of social life can advance educational research on inclusion and exclusion, we should first explain how we demarcate the field of practice theories. For present purposes, we will define the core of this field by reference to four theses.

The first thesis is that social life is centrally comprised of practices. In highlighting practices, practice theories thereby oppose or restrict the ontological significance of such phenomena as individuals, interactions, structures, systems, and social wholes. The second thesis is that social practices connect and, as connected, form wider bundles, complexes, or constellations. Closely allied to this thesis is the idea that social life transpires in what might be called the "plenum" of practices: the entirety of practices and bundles/complexes/constellations thereof. This vision points toward the third thesis, namely, that social phenomena consist in aspects or slices of this plenum. The fourth thesis,

finally, is the idea that human activity rests on practical capacities whose specific bearing on activity in particular situations cannot be rendered linguistically or symbolically. Of course, theories of practices vary in their elaborations of these four theses, that is, in their accounts of what practices are, of the sorts of connections that exist between practices, of the bundles and complexes that practices form and the relationship of these bundles and complexes to social phenomena, and of the practical capacities that underlie action and what to call them.<sup>1</sup>

Using these four theses to demarcate the core of practice theory, it follows that prominent core practice theorists include Pierre Bourdieu, Anthony Giddens, Elizabeth Shove, Silvia Gherardi, Andreas Reckwitz, Davide Nicolini, and Thomas Alkemeyer. In education, prominent researchers who qualify include Jean Lave, Stephen Kemmis, Jane Wilkinson, Karin Rönnerman, Stephen Billet, and Paul Hager.

Surrounding this core lies a range of practice approaches that fill out the wider field of practice theory. These approaches make the concept of practices central to their analyses of social affairs but either decline one or more of the other aforementioned theses or lean toward equating practices with situated actions. Such approaches include so-called “practice-based approaches” in organization studies, MacIntyre (see 1981) accounts of practices, certain forms of discourse theory and, a little more far afield, ethnomethodology, sociocultural action theory, and actor network theory.

### Practice theory and space/place in educational research

*Praxis* and (social/cultural) *practice(s)*—likewise, *space* and *place*—are expressions that ceaselessly circulate and disseminate through the education sciences. Often unthematized, taken for granted, and commonplace (Green, 2009; Hager et al., 2012), the terms as they are actually used point far beyond both the aforementioned and alternative demarcations (Kajetzke & Schroer, 2015; Schmidt, 2012) of the core, surrounding and periphery of the practice theory field. Over the last decade, moreover, practice-(based)-approaches and classic/contemporary practice theories alike have made inroads into education science research internationally (Budde et al., 2018; Grootenboer et al., 2017; Lynch et al., 2018). A plethora of educational topics have been theorized and analyzed in connection with the four theses mentioned in the previous section, including a range of pedagogical practices<sup>2</sup> (Budde & Eckermann, 2021), learning (Hopwood, 2016; Kemmis, 2021; Schatzki, 2017), learning cultures (Reh et al., 2015), teacher learning (Sjølie et al., 2019), professional practice, educational leadership (Wilkinson, 2021), transformation and development (Berdemann et al., 2018; Moldenhauer & Kuhlmann, 2021; Rönnerman & Olin, 2021), practicing subjectivity (Lynch et al., 2018; Rabenstein, 2007) and differences (Budde & Rißler, 2017).

Even though studies on inclusion/exclusion in education drawing on elements of practice theories have begun to appear (Blasse, forthcoming;<sup>3</sup> Merl,

2021) there remains a need for additional studies that take up this approach to the topic (Budde et al., 2017). What is particularly needed are practice theoretical accounts of inclusion and exclusion in education that take account of the spatial and placial forms and determinants of inclusion and exclusion in education. Debates on the potential contributions and benefits of theorizations of space and place remain “sporadic” in the education sciences generally (Bollig & Millei, 2018, p. 7). Such inattention definitely characterizes practice theoretical analyses, which hardly touch on the spatial and placial features of education (Bollig, 2018; Reißler & Budde, 2017; Berdelmann & Reh, 2015), including in practice theoretical research on “inclusive” education, a field which is dominated by approaches other than practice theory. Indeed, studies of space (Moebius, 2010) in research on inclusive education refer (if at all, e.g., Kricke et al., 2018) to theorizations of space/place found in other traditions<sup>4</sup>—for example, (neo-)Marxisms, sociocultural action theories (Trescher & Hauck, 2020; Modes, 2016), (post)structuralisms (Nugel, 2017), and praxeological sociology of knowledge (Wagener & Wagner-Willi, 2017). Or they use space and place “as metaphors for understandings and practices relating to belonging and not belonging, inclusion and exclusion” (Hemingway & Armstrong, 2014, p. 2) or take space/place for granted (cf. Schroer, 2008, p. 126). So far, there is no systematic examination of the spatial dimensions of educational practices or the spatial and placial forms and determinants of inclusion and exclusion in education.<sup>5</sup>

In educational science, the term “inclusion” is used in two ways: (1) to describe the integration of children with special educational needs (SEN) into regular pedagogical systems in the context of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and (2) to designate a culturally constructed phenomenon inherently contrasted with its opposite, exclusion. Theories of practices enable researchers to construe the inclusion and exclusion that occur via practices and their spaces as processes that continually transpire as practices are enacted. On the specific approach sketched here, inclusion in both senses is tied to the carrying on of practices, which itself is treated as a happening that occurs in sites. The idea that practice-arrangement bundles form site(s) of the social (cf. Schatzki, 2002) means that understanding educational practices requires attending simultaneously both to practices and to arrangements of material objects. This implication applies equally well to the inclusion/exclusion that are instantiated in and effected through practice spaces and places.

### **Space and place in theories of practices**

All practice theory-informed research of a broadly ethnographical character encounters and at a minimum registers spatial matters. Some practice researchers thematize these phenomena and study them or explain other things by reference to them. Far fewer practice theorists have theorized space as part of their accounts of social life. Especially prominent among these are Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens.

According to Bourdieu (1976, 1990), social life—maybe just modern social life (Wacquant & Akçaoğlu, 2017)—is organized as a collection of fields. Each of these fields can be thought of as an arena within which practices of certain sorts are carried on. These arenas are a kind of bounded realm (cf. Schatzki, 2002) that admits of actions that accord with a social space-organized practical logic structured by families of oppositions. The concept of fields is intrinsically spatial in character: it designates *where*, abstractly, a bunch of practices takes place.

Each field, moreover, is organized around something that is at stake in it, for instance, profit in economic fields or credentials in educational fields. Participants in a field compete over its stakes, following strategies that are tied to the capitals available to them. The particular strategies they follow, like what they do in implementing them, are determined by their practical dispositions, which Bourdieu calls “habitus”. People acquire habitus primarily while maturing, though the habitus continues to evolve throughout life. The habitus people acquire, like its evolution, depends on the social conditions to which they are subjected, for instance, the practices that are carried on in the fields they enter and, most importantly, the economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capitals available to them. Capital is important because it determines people’s resources, opportunities, and relations to others. Taking up practices in particular fields while possessing particular combinations of capitals, people come to acquire “senses of the game”, that is, practical grasps of how to act in those fields: a sense of politics, of religion, of sports—and of teaching and learning (etc.). These practical senses subsequently govern how they proceed in these (and other) fields.

Practical sense is reinforced by the material layout of the world. For this layout results from and reflects people’s practices and thus the habitus of those enacting the practices. Material settings thereby come to embody meanings that abet and solicit the continued performance of the same practices. What’s more, young people who proceed through thus meaningful settings tend to acquire a habitus that generates these practices. This habitus is homologous to that possessed by others who carry on there, as well as the habitus of those who laid out the settings. The result is that the distribution of capitals, people’s habitus, the practices they carry on, and the layouts of the material settings they proceed through reflect and reinforce one another.

Two sorts of space are bound up with fields: material space, and what Bourdieu calls “social space.” A social space is an abstract space of combinations of the different sorts of capital. It is a mathematical space. Imagine a three-dimensional Euclidean space, each of whose axes measure quantity of one of the three principal capitals. A plot of the different capitals that individual people possess reveals clusters of points, clusters of individuals with similar combinations of the three. These clusters define positions in social space. As noted, the position a person occupies in this space affects her opportunities, strategies, actions, and relations to others. Indeed, social spaces of this sort play a crucial role in shaping the overall complex formed by social space, habitus, practice, and material layout.

The other sort of space in Bourdieu's account is material space. Material space is less a physical space than, as noted, a meaningful constellation of objects, speaking to people of the places objects occupy in fields and the practices carried on there. According to Bourdieu, as people go through their day, moving about in physical space, the actions their habitus generates are attuned to the meanings of the objects amid which they proceed. He also claims, memorably, that merely by proceeding through thus meaningful physical spaces, encountering, learning, and participating in practices there, a young person becomes familiar not just with the meanings of objects and settings, but also with the "principles" responsible for those meanings, these being at once the principles that are coming to govern his or her habitus. This pedagogical process is both wordless and bodily, bypassing cognition and consciousness.

Meanwhile, Anthony Giddens is well-known both for conceptualizing practices as entities that extend over time and space (see Giddens, 1991) and for arguing that extension over these dimensions requires structural organization (by sets of rules and resources). He thereby builds space and time into his basic concepts instead of, as is usual, treating them as supplementary to a repertoire of such concepts. He also (see Giddens, 1979, 1984) conceptualizes structural organization in terms of "spacings", though this spatial concept really just stands in for the idea of a set of differences. Giddens does not write much about the sort of space involved in extension over space (and time). One way of thinking about it is as terrestrial space, that is, the partly built, partly natural material surface of the globe, across which practices propagate. The space over which practices extend is thus an expanse, as opposed to the local material spaces that are immediate settings of action in Bourdieu (of course, the two connect).

Giddens, however, conceptualizes something that resembles immediate settings of action. It is, in fact, the most important spatial notion in his work for the present discussion. Giddens uses the term "locale" to denote settings that bear on and are drawn into interactions between people (see 1984, ch. 3). In theory, a *locale* can range in scope from a classroom, a vestibule, and a cafeteria to an entire school, a neighborhood, a city, and even a nation-state. Regardless of its scope, when a material expanse is a locale, aspects of a material arrangement bear on and are drawn on in interactions. This regularly happens when the interactions occur as part of social formations (e.g., fifth grade, a school, a city police force, a national government) that are centered on the expanses involved (as a school is on a complex of classrooms, offices, gym, bathrooms, etc., or a city is on a network of buildings, streets, parks, infrastructures, etc.). Usually, however, Giddens treats locales as the more immediate settings of action that people use and are attuned to in interacting. As in Bourdieu, immediate locales are, in effect, a type of meaningful physical space, where the meanings—in a more phenomenological and less structuralist tune than in Bourdieu—concern the usability of objects in human activity.

Giddens holds that locales are regionalized in relation to the practices proceeding in them: a region is a zone where particular practices instead of others take place. A school, for instance, is regionalized into classrooms, offices,

cafeteria, gym, and so on in reference to the differing practices that are carried on in each. A classroom, moreover, is regionalized when different practices are carried on in different parts of it. Regionalization is also relative to time, as when a gym is the site of different activities at different times of the day. *Regions* can also be catalogued by reference to the form their boundaries take, their temporal duration, their distribution through physical space, and both types of practices carried on in them (e.g., educational vs. economic) and the ordering of these practices in wider social systems. All this implies that regions are a type of place, namely, places for carrying on practices A, B, and C.

Bourdieu and Giddens acknowledge important spatial phenomena. Their conceptions of settings highlight the meaningfulness for humans of both objects and the physical spaces that objects define. Their ideas thereby stress at once the indomitability of the world as physical and the fact that humans encounter the world, and act in it, as meaningful. Each theorist also highlights additional spaces: abstract mathematical distributions called “social spaces” in Bourdieu, and both terrestrial space and places for carrying on specific practices (regions) in Giddens. Both physical space and something resembling but broader in scope than locales and regions appear in the third practice theory account of space to be considered here. Nothing like Bourdieu’s social space, however, will be utilized. As we see things, social spaces are not so much spaces of social life as functions of data plots in mathematical representations of the social world.

### **A third practice theoretical approach to space**

Schatzki has returned repeatedly to space in his work (particularly Schatzki, 2002, 2010, 2019; see also Schatzki, 2007). He argues that practices—sets of organized doings and sayings—are intimately connected to arrangements of material entities (bodies, artifacts, organisms, and things of nature) and that practice-arrangement bundles are the basic unit of conceptuality in analyzing social life. In addition, such bundles connect and, as connected, form wider constellations, the entirety of bundles and constellations forming the so-called “practice plenum”. All social phenomena are aspects or slices of this plenum.

Schatzki incorporates three notions of space into his analyses of bundles and constellations thereof: physical space, activity spatiality, and encompassing place. *Physical space* is tied to the material nature of things and automatically exists whenever there is a configuration of material things; it arises from such configurations, whose elements at once exist in it. The physical space of such a configuration is the physical distribution of the things that make it up relative to one another. Accordingly, the physical spaces of practice-arrangement bundles are the relative physical distributions of (1) the material things that make up the arrangements among which the practices involved proceed, and (2) the bodies that perform the actions that compose these practices. And the physical spaces of a constellation are the total connected physical distributions of (1) all the things making up the arrangements among which the constellation’s

practices propagate, and (2) all the bodies that perform the activities composing these practices. Note that Giddens's terrestrial space is also a form of physical space and that it undergirds and overlaps with the physical spaces of the practice plenum.

The second type of space is *activity spatialities*. Spatialities are arrays of places and paths, where a place is a place to do something (a place to X), and a path is avenue of access between places. A classroom, for example, houses places to write, to sit, to read, to give reports, to work together, to post notes and pictures, and so on. Arrays of places and paths are distributed through the circumjacent environment through which people proceed. Anchored in material things, they are distributed through physical space. Human life is such that people, in their moment-to-moment existences, proceed through the world sensitive to the anchoring about them of particular places and paths at particular entities. If a student wants to read something, for example, they might go to their desk or to the corner where the class bookcase stands next to a pair of chairs. Note that activity spatialities are a kind of meaningfulness possessed by the material world. In such spatialities, something's meaning is how it fits into organized activities as something used and acted at. This kind of meaning converges with the sorts of meaning that Bourdieu and Giddens ascribe to the objects that compose, respectively, settings of action and immediate locales.

Which places and paths are anchored at which material entities partly depends on the ends that people pursue in the practices—possibly multiple practices—that are bundled with the arrangements involved. The teacher's desk, for instance, might be a place to consult with students earlier in the day and a place to grade later on. The distribution of places and paths also depends on the normativized organizations of the practices involved, which result in (a) distributions of normativized anchorings of places and paths across the arrangements concerned and (b) participants' activities conforming to these distributions (e.g., a desk as a place to write is a normative feature of schoolroom practices that students and teachers uphold by writing at desks). Relativity to practices distinguishes activity spatiality from physical space. Whereas physical spaces are inherent features of arrangements of physical entities, activity spatialities are relative to practices and practitioners.

The third sort of space is *encompassing place*. An encompassing place is a meaningful localized region, through which people proceed related to it as a whole (cf. Cresswell, 2015; Massey, 1994; Tuan, 1977; for problems and history, see Casey, 1997). Like Giddens's locales, encompassing places can range in size from immediate settings such as classrooms and locker corridors to schools and neighborhoods, and even cities, nation-states, and the earth. What qualifies any of these localized regions—a localized region is one that has a boundary, however indefinite or labile (cf. Chaudhary, 2020)—as an encompassing place is (1) that it holds significance, as a whole, for some group of people; and (2) that these people bear some sort of relation to it as a whole, ranging from thin connections such as having a name for it, to intermediate connections such as a “sense of place”, to thick connections such as deep



emotional attachment or repulsion. Giddens's regions, as places to carry on this and that practice, possess a kind of significance that can help qualify them as encompassing places in Schatzki's sense. What Giddens calls "locales" can likewise qualify as such places (though the kind of significance they possess is different). Like, moreover, activity spatialities, and unlike physical space, encompassing places are relative to practices and individuals. Just as different arrays of places and paths can be anchored via different practices or practitioners at the same material entities, different encompassing places can encompass one and the same geographical expanse, in different practices or even for different participants in the same practices (e.g., national park land as wilderness and as ancestral grounds; Spence, 1996).

The material component of a practice-arrangement bundle contains physical spaces, anchors activity spatialities, and can be part of the material base of a(n) encompassing place(s). Similarly, any constellation of bundles contains multiple, likely connected physical spaces, sports a multitude of activity spatialities, and can help undergird an indefinite number of encompassing places. Inclusion and exclusion are features of bundles and constellations. Accordingly, these spatial features offer resources for specifying and studying them.

### Aspects of practical spatial/placial inclusion and exclusion

The spatial and placial dimensions of inclusion and exclusion are multiple, complex, and overlapping. At the same time, in-/exclusion could be seen as features of bundles and constellations. This section highlights ways in which spaces of the three just discussed sorts—physical space, activity spatialities, and encompassing place(s)—that are characteristic of educational bundles intersect with in-/exclusion in these bundles. It does so by presenting empirical examples illustrating this intersection from two community schools located in the state of Schleswig-Holstein, in northern Germany. The findings are based on ethnographic data gathered in two research projects at Europa-Universität Flensburg: *Kooperationspraxis im inklusiven Unterricht* (KoPra) (Cooperation Practice in Inclusive Education) funded by BMBF<sup>6</sup> and *Gemeinschaftsschule & Inklusion* (Community Schools & Inclusion).<sup>7</sup>

#### *In-/excluding places to X and encompassing places*

Activity spatialities and their anchoring in material arrangements and their physical spaces, including (particular) places to X stationed at (particular) objects and locations, contribute to in-/exclusion. Any setting is inherently inclusive and exclusive since it houses and anchors particular normativized activity spatialities (relative to practices) and not others. Any setting, furthermore, can be the material basis of in-/excluding *encompassing places*—meaningful localized regions—relative to practices and individuals.

For instance, educational settings such as classrooms can both qualify as and contain (encompassing) places of repulsion/attraction or detachment/

attachment. A classroom can be, or contain, a place of repulsion when either the activity spatialities that are opened in the bundle there contain places to X, and/or the bundle's material arrangements contain spatial positions, the occupation of which causes considerable discomfort for some, though not necessarily all, participants in the practices involved. Since these participants seek to avoid these places and positions when carrying on the practices, prescribed places to X may bring about in-/excluding effects. An example of an *unsettling, potentially excluding* place to X is the often-prescribed *place to present one's own work, anchored at a specific spot relative to other anchorings*: standing in front of the class and giving a talk facing the classmates while the latter sit at their desks, all ears and eyes on the presenter.

“The teacher calls David. ... David stands up hesitantly. ... He seems nervous—his body seems totally tense. Shoulders slightly hunched, head like a turtle between sticking out and pulling in, always looking at the floor, then sometimes looking to the side. On his face, a tense uncertain smile. His arms hang limply at his sides, dangling slightly. ... After the teacher gives a start signal and says “*okay*”, David looks silently at the floor and then at the teacher. After a while she says: “*You can start with ‘in the morning’*”. David: “In the morning I eat (2) cornflakes”. (4) Teacher: “*For lunch*”. David quietly: “For lunch” (8). David seems to be at a loss. There is dead silence in the room. David looks at the floor, at the class, at the teacher. Teacher: “I like to eat ...” David gets even quieter than he already is—I can barely hear him. He says something with “fruit soup”. The teacher says quietly and encouragingly, looking friendly: “Yes. And in the evening?” David can no longer be understood. It is not as if his voice is rolling over; rather, he is still getting quieter. Then he is silent. (3) Teacher: “I like to eat ...” David says nothing, but looks at the floor, then grins briefly uncertainly at the teacher. The silence seems like an eternity. The room is dead silent. Everyone stares expectantly at David. The teacher then again very quietly suggests what David could say “(???) or (???) or ...” David can't get another word out. After about 6 seconds, the teacher quietly says one or two words to David. He shakes his head”.

David does not proceed in line with the normative activity spatialities opened in the teaching and learning practices at school one. Acting as David does—tense body, stuttering, slowly becoming silent—does not meet the normative organization of the practice and its places. If this lack of compliance is understood as a feature of performance, David simply fails. In school contexts, repeated failure can lead to exclusion from classroom and other practice-arrangement bundles and, thereby, from the activity options available there.

Moreover, entire settings, especially but not only when they contain such places of repulsion, can be the material basis of an encompassing place of detachment. For example, the presence of repulsive places in a classroom can make the classroom or the school into an encompassing place of detachment

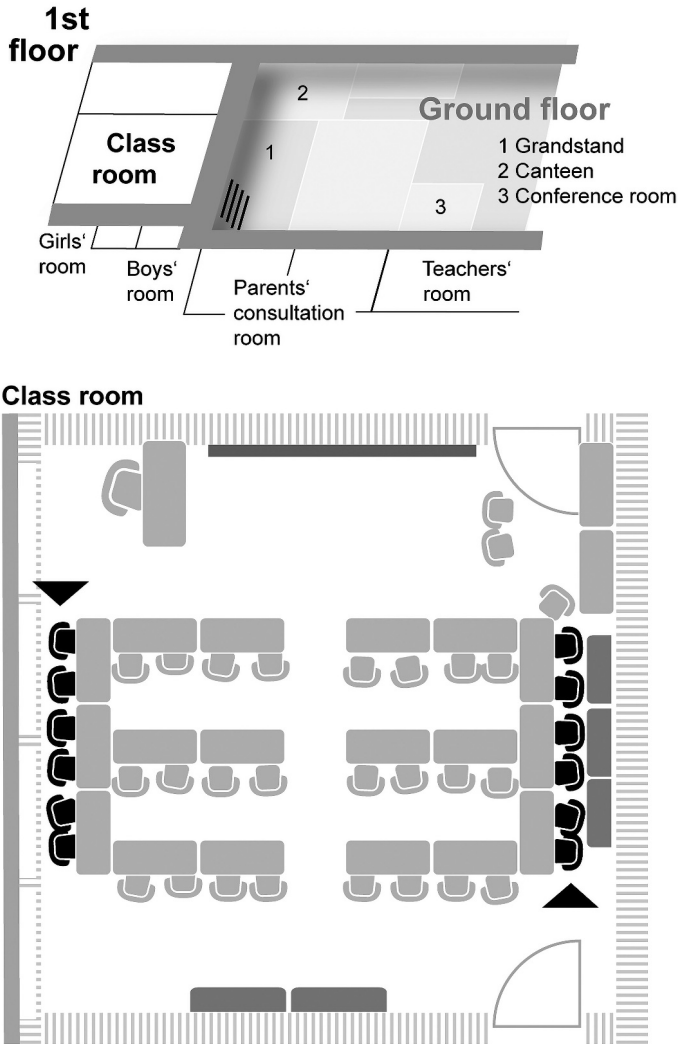
for some students. Since some students have troubled relations to encompassing places of this character, encompassing places, and not just particular places to X in them, can be in-/exclusive.

### *Physical spaces*

Generally speaking, prefiguration is the present shaping the future by differentially qualifying possible actions and possible action trajectories on a variety of registers such as easier or harder, longer or shorter, more or less costly, more or less observant of norms, more or less pleasant, and so on (see Schatzki, 2002, 2019). The physical spaces of arrangements and bundles prefigure action trajectories in this sense, including how people proceed at particular places and paths and how they can interact with each other. Prefiguration is relative to, among other things, persons and their bodies. In educational settings, the distribution of material entities differentially prefigure the bodily movements of the varied people there. In a classroom of school one, for example the objective spatial ordering made it considerably harder and more inconvenient as well as time-consuming for a large, as opposed to an average-sized, person to access the cabinet where teaching materials for students with SEN were stored. A large person couldn't get there without moving tables and chairs and requesting students to stand up and give way, whereas more average-sized persons could simply head to the cabinet, navigating between material objects. In this classroom, the occupation of specific places anchored at the cabinet, like the navigation of avenues of access between places, was prefigured differently for different persons. This relativization of the prefiguration of movements, action paths, and possibilities to actors' bodies clearly can have inclusive and exclusive effects (Figure 6.1).

Since arrangements determine (non)viable avenues and (in)feasible movements, in part relative to actor/body, they also, and similarly relatively, prefigure processes of inclusion and exclusion, including those concerning accessibility and the occupation of places. In addition, the setting—a classroom—itsself prefigured possible arrangements of chairs, tables, and students relative to one another. Settings, however, prefigure not just movements, but action trajectories as well. Just as “[s]ettings ... are often set up as sites where a given practice or set thereof is to be carried out” (Schatzki, 1996, p. 114), settings like classrooms, parent consulting rooms, and school foyers are typically laid out to facilitate particular action trajectories. Note that in many cases, prefiguration and its in-/exclusive effects are unintended. Whether unintended side effect or intended aim, the fact that settings differently prefigure different participants' movements, routes, and action trajectories contributes to inclusion/exclusion.

This observation also holds for spatial orderings of participants' bodies in classroom settings. In a particular classroom setting, for example, two students with SEN—Sophia and Sandy—were spatially separated at a distance from one another. Their separation was motivated by their instructor's belief that Sandy needed to be forced to interact with students without SEN, thus not with



*Figure 6.1* Physical space and the prefiguration of places and paths relative to actors.

Sophia. Because of this understanding, interacting with others became an important developmental task set for Sandy, and Sandy's spatial position relative to Sophia's was justified pedagogically: the teachers sought to anchor at Sandy's desk a place to interact with students other than Sophia. Sophia, as a result, was intentionally excluded (Figure 6.2).

Another way to describe this example is to say that the layout of the classroom and its objective spatial orderings was called on to make some interactions involving particular individuals easier and other interactions between particular people harder, costlier, more complicated, and so on. In particular,

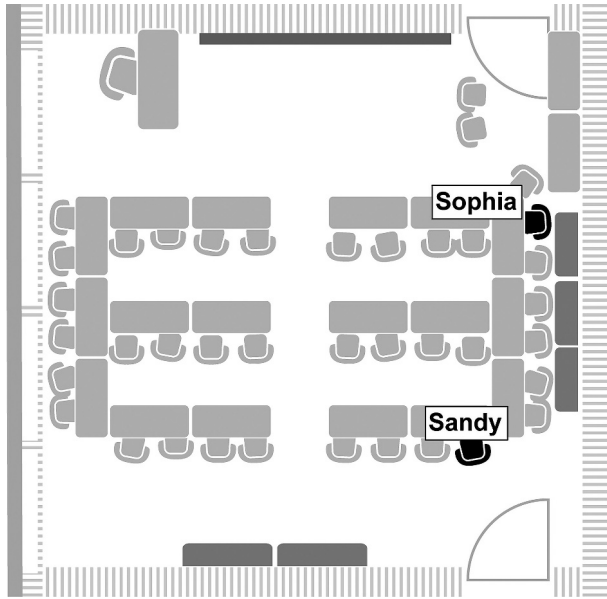


Figure 6.2 Spatial ordering and exclusion.

it was supposed to exclude Sophia and the anchoring at her desk of a place for her to interact with Sandy. It should be added, however, that the situation eventuated in Sandy avoiding interactions with students without SEN and taking every chance to interact with Sophia, though mainly before and after lesson and via eye contact.

These examples show that spatial orderings of bodies in pedagogical contexts relative to one another are tied both to subject-position, that is, “who” the people involved are understood—or understand themselves—to be: teacher, assistant, boy, girl, (non)achiever, disturber, prankster, friend of X but not of Z, etc., and to configurations of material things. These examples also show that these spatial orderings differentially prefigure, not just movements, action trajectories, and activity spatialities, but *visibilities*, *audibilities*, *tangibilities*, and *speakingabilities* as well. Who and what is visible to whom, who and what is touchable by whom, who and what is hearable by and speakable to whom—in overlapping and indefinitely complex ways—is differently prefigured for different persons. Accordingly, arrangements prefigure, in complex, overlapping, and sometimes even contradictory ways, *who* and *what* is included or excluded, and how.

***Inclusive schools and in-/exclusive bundles? Classrooms—regular education and differentiation room(s)—special education***

Classes found in schools that are considered to be, and/or that understand themselves to be, “inclusive” often make systematic use of supplementary material settings. Such settings are typically accessible directly from the main classroom settings and are called “diff(erentiation)-rooms” (Blasse,

forthcoming). Classroom settings are also sometimes complemented by so-called “(parents) consultation rooms”, “group rooms”, or halls and hallways.

Practice-arrangement bundles at school two serve to illustrate key dimensions of spacial/placial in-/exclusion tied to classroom setting. The doings and sayings performed amid-with material entities as part of the allegedly “inclusive” educational bundles that transpire there follow a recurring choreography. Subject lessons, especially the double-staffed main ones (mathematics, English, and German), usually follow a particular sequence. In an opening phase, the regular teacher addresses all the students present in the setting—the classroom—regardless of whether they have or do not have SEN. The arrangement in the classroom at this point includes material entities such as desks, chairs, and blackboards, which, together with the people, compose an objective spatial ordering that both includes and excludes. In this opening phase, this arrangement is the material base of an encompassing place—the classroom—for all the students and staff, though not for others who are ignorant of what transpires there and are thus excluded. In the opening phase, moreover, places (and paths) are likewise common to participants, who proceed through and in relation to the same set of places anchored at the same entities, as enjoined in the normative organization of the practices carried on there. As Schatzki (2015) states: “in a classroom places to sit and face forward and places to stand and face the class are anchored at desks and boards for all those enacting learning and teaching practices because this anchoring is enjoined in such practices” (p. 3).

In the transition from the opening phase to the following one, the students are usually divided into two groups, and the human constituents of the arrangements in the class and in the “diff-room” change. Students without SEN stay in the main classroom performing certain activities. Bodies sit on chairs at grouped desks, move heads and eyes toward and between the blackboard and notebooks, move hands and pencils etc. At first, students without SEN copy what’s written on the blackboard and listen to the regular teacher presenting tasks. Quickly, however, special education teacher Kerstin quietly and discreetly guides students with SEN to a room directly attached to and accessible from the classroom. With this division of students into groups according to SEN status, two inclusion- and exclusion-effecting bundles are constituted: a regular educational practices-classroom arrangement bundle involving a regular teacher and students without SEN and a special educational practice-“diff-room” bundle involving special education teacher(s) and students with SEN (Figure 6.3).

Special education teacher Kerstin seeks eye contact with Selinay. She beckons her over with her forefinger. Then, Kerstin looks at Eva and repeats the same movement with her finger. Selinay and Eva get up, take their pencil cases, and walk over to Kerstin. Meanwhile Kerstin maintains eye contact with José. José shakes his head pointing to the regular teacher with his forefinger. The regular teacher stands in front of the blackboard, currently presenting the new work order. Kerstin repeats the finger movement to José; he reluctantly gets up and “trudges” to the door of the “diff-room”.

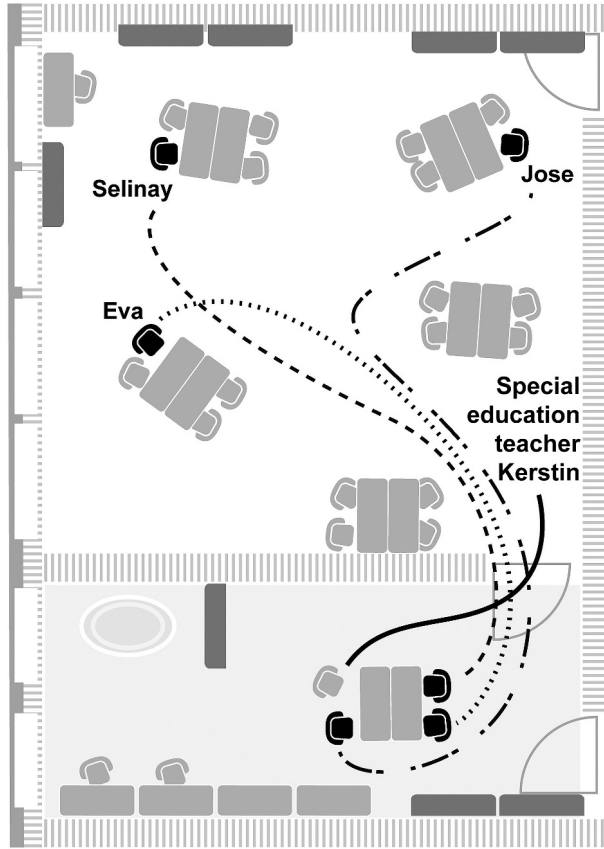


Figure 6.3 Establishment of a regular educational practices–classroom arrangement bundle and a special educational practice–diff-room bundle.

From this point on, students with or without SEN are part of and proceed in distinct practice-arrangement bundles, sensitive to distinct activity spatialities anchored in the two distinct sets of encompassing places making up the two settings involved. According to their SEN status, in other words, students are divided and included in or excluded from particular physical spaces and activity spatialities. As a result, both individual and group-related task- and worksheet-based activities proceed—in a similar in-/exclusive manner—in appointed places anchored at chairs and tables. And it is likely that the different material complexes give different contours and hierarchical attractiveness to the encompassing places—e.g., “my class” or “where I learn”—that either group of students understands to be there. Transitioning from one phase to the next, the practices performed by the regular teacher and students without SEN, and those performed by the special education teachers and students with SEN, proceed

amid and through different material arrangements that anchor different activity spatialities and give different contours to the encompassing place.

Note, incidentally, that the two practice-arrangement bundles are quite alike. Both largely consist of individualized learning. The doings, sayings, and actions performed as part of the two bundles are very similar. And these doings and sayings are anchored at objects of the same type, e.g., tables, chairs, and writing boards. As a result, the two in-/exclusive bundles of practices and material arrangements also open and anchor similar activity place spaces. Despite these similarities, tasks and ends are tailored to individuals in the “diff-room” bundle, whereas students participating in the classroom bundle pretty much pursue the same tasks and for the same ends. These two evolving bundles further differ not only in “who” their participants are, but also in other material constituents. The “diff-room” consists of a table and chairs, a computer, several shelves, cupboards, a cloakroom, and a bookshelf, as well as pads and pillows. Since the setting is exclusively occupied by students of a particular status, the common paths and places to x that this setting prefigures for all (e.g., computing at the table, relaxing in the cozy corner of pads and pillows) are offered exclusively to a small set of students. However, since the activities of instructors and students in the “diff-room” regularly take place at the tables alone, many options included in this setting fade into the background. The allegedly cozy corner consisting of pads and pillows is not used.

Consider a second “inclusive” school where similar proceedings happen. At this school, students with SEN regularly leave the classroom setting with special education teacher (SET) Hannah or school assistant Christin:

School assistant Christin and Sophia leave the classroom and walk into the “parents consultation room”. Sophia heads straight for the chair by the window, which has an armrest on the left and right, and sits there. Christine sits down at Sophia’s side [to Sophia’s right as seen by Sophia]. I sit down to Sophia’s left. Sophia makes a scowling face. Her eyes slightly narrowed, she looks down. The school assistant puts sheets of paper on the table and says that Sophia should “practice numbers.”

When Christin and Sophia leave the room, teaching and learning now proceed amid-with a different material arrangement. In other lessons, special education teacher Hannah takes the two students with SEN—Sandy and Sophia—to a group room, while the other students and regular teacher Stephanie continue their lesson in the foyer, which in “giving space” prefigures and anchors places to x in the way arrangements in the classroom and supplementary rooms do. Sandy and Sophia take part in neither the social formation in the foyer, the activity spatiality anchored there, nor the encompassing place that is grounded in its material arrangements (though they are of course part of the larger school constellation).



### Spaces of practices and in-/exclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to show that attending to the spatial and placial features of bundles of practices and material arrangements can advance educational research on in-/exclusion. To support this thesis, the discussion circumscribed theories of practices in general, described their presence in educational research, and explored three prominent treatments of space and place in the practice theoretical literature. Taking up Schatzki's version of social practice theory, inclusion and exclusion were then conceptualized as features of bundles and constellations. Thereafter, the elaborate understandings of space, spatiality, and places developed in this theory were used to illustrate—through empirical material from two different schools—several complex entanglements of practices, spaces, spatialities, and places with processes of in-/exclusion.

This analysis shows that all three types of space Schatzki identifies—physical space, activity spatiality, and encompassing place—represent rich but not yet sufficiently marshaled resources for illuminating how in-/exclusion proceeds in school and teaching practices. *Physical spaces*, or the relative physical distributions of the material things that make up the arrangements among which practices proceed, can have in-/exclusive effects, among other things, both on and relative to participants' bodies. *Activity spatialities*, or the arrays of places and paths that are distributed through physical space relative to, among other things, identities like student, teacher, SEN, girl/boy etc., likewise can have in-/exclusive effects. *Encompassing place(s)*—meaningful localized region(s) through which people proceed related to them as wholes—are another spatial phenomenon through which in-/exclusion can be specified and studied. In addition, Schatzki's theory itself qualifies as inclusive. This is for two reasons, First, it attends to different dimensions and aspects of space. Second, it offers a framework that allows exclusions in specific spaces (e.g. the classroom) to be understood as systematically related to inclusion in larger constellations (e.g. the school). Its rich possibilities for an educational-spatial analysis of inclusion/exclusion require further exploration.

### Notes

- 1 Examples of prominent names include habitus, practical consciousness, skills, know-how, and knowing how to go on.
- 2 For example, conveying, caring, counselling, training/"practicing", evaluating and assessing, organizing, teaching, learning, and educating.
- 3 Blasse analyzes inclusion on the basis of artifacts, spaces, and places. Blasse's space-based practice-theoretical approach undergirds an anti-essentialist perspective that opposes tendencies to naturalize or essentialize "disability" in educational discourse on inclusion.
- 4 Some of which count as antecedents of practice theory (cf. Nicolini, 2012).
- 5 In accordance with this diagnosis, Schmidt et al. (2019, p. 93) point to a lack of systematic examinations concerning the spatial dimensions of social practices in geography.

- 6 The project was funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (funding code FKZ 01NV1702B). The responsibility for the content of this publication lies with the authors.
- 7 Both community schools distinguish themselves through an explicit and positive reference to inclusion.

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## 7 The education marketSpace

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Market-driven educational policies are one of the most contested and enacted education policies around the globe. I define market-driven education policies as the conglomeration of “education policies that incorporate elements of capitalism into their design” (Scott & Holme, 2016, p. 251). Market-driven educational policies act together to make school districts behave like markets and public schools like individual businesses that compete for enrolling families and creating education marketplaces. In addition to school choice, market-driven policies include the development of public-private partnerships (PPPs) to deliver public education. There are different kinds of PPPs around the world, e.g., “academies” or “free schools” in England, “escuelas concertadas” in Spain, and charter schools in the United States, to name a few. Though there are differences among them, they have a common denominator: they are privately run schools funded by public funds (Zancajo et al., 2021). Other market-driven policies include accountability based on quantifiable indicators (such as test scores and graduation rates), merit pay for teachers, school closures, student-based budgets, and austerity measures to “right size” school districts during budget shortages. Generalizations about the implementation of such policies in different countries are difficult to make. Market-driven educational policies are enacted according to local histories, geographies, and sociocultural contexts (Edwards & Means, 2019), sometimes implemented as whole packages and sometimes by pieces (Brenner & Theodore, 2002).

Despite local interpretations and implementations, market-driven educational policies share some common assumptions. They promise to increase educational inclusion for those populations who have not have access to quality educational opportunities (Chubb & Moe, 1990). One of the core assumptions of these reforms is that parents act as rational decision makers who weight different educational options and select the best school for their child. That is, these reforms assume that choosing a school is an individualistic and psychological phenomenon. Supporters of market-driven policies assert that over time, this consumer behavior will increase access to quality

schools because (1) schools will seek to improve their quality to compete for students, and (2) schools that are of poor quality or have low student enrollment will close. Thus, only the best schools will continue operation (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Manno et al., 1999). School choice policies, thus, seem to deliver some of the core promises of inclusive education: access to quality schools and improve educational outcomes for all students (Ainscow et al., 2006).

Research examining the capacity of market-driven policies to deliver on such promises presents findings difficult to reconcile. First, while some research conceptualizes parents as individual consumers of education, other studies contextualize parental choice within the limitations of structural factors related to class, race, and dis/ability. Second, while some studies indicate that market-driven policies have opened new forms of inclusion through the diversification of educational options, other research has documented and examined how they generate new or reproduce existent forms of exclusion. This chapter aims to resolve these contradictory findings in the following way. First, I examine such juxtaposing of findings focusing on students with disabilities. Second, I address findings about parents as consumers, and then I turn to findings about the inclusion or exclusion generated by market-driven educational policies. Then, I draw from my book *Excluded by Choice: Urban Students with Disabilities in the Education Marketplace* (Waitoller, 2020) to offer the concept of the *Education MarketSpace* to make sense of such contradictory findings.

### **Parents as consumers?**

Research examining how parents chose schools has produced different kinds of results. First, researchers have conceptualized school choice as a process of instrumental rationality based on rational actor theory (Bast & Walberg, 2004). Such a stand positions parents as rational consumers that make deliberate rational decisions according to their family situations and preferences. Research, for instance, often reports that parents, particularly those of higher socioeconomic background, select schools according to their academic quality (Burgess et al., 2015; Rhode et al., 2019), supporting the claims that market-driven policies can extend inclusion in quality schools. In addition, parents opt for schools that are conveniently located to their home or their daily commutes (Kleitz et al., 2000; Lee & Lubienski, 2016; Yoon & Lubienski, 2018). Teacher quality, class size, and special education services available, and avoiding identification for special education and subsequent segregation, are referenced by parents of students with disabilities as reasons to opt for a given school (Lange & Lehr, 2000; Rhim & McLaughlin, 2007).

Second, research reported that parents base decisions not always on concrete measurable factors such as distance to a school or academic quality, but on the perceptions of and feelings about the schools and the neighborhoods

and communities surrounding them. That is, parents attach meaning to neighborhoods, communities, and schools according to the social, historical, and demographic characteristics of the school location (Bell, 2009; Goyette et al., 2012; Moschetti & Verger, 2020; Schneider & Buckley, 2002). While some parents may conflate issues of safety with the demographic makeup of a school and the history of the neighborhood around it, other parents send their children to a school within their neighborhood because they identify as part of that community (Bell, 2009).

In both cases, whether the researchers privilege rational decision making or the sense making and imagination of parents about certain spaces, they privileged a bounded view of the individual. They focus on an internal psychological process to make decisions, backgrounding the historical, economic, and social factors that shaped parents' relationship with schools.

Finally, another group of studies examined the organizational behavior of schools to situate themselves in the education marketplace. This research indicates that parents do not choose schools, but the other way around (Jabbar, 2016). Schools implement strategies to shape their school enrollment, excluding unwanted students (e.g., students with learning and behavioral difficulties; Mommandi & Welner, 2021). Some of these strategies include how schools' market themselves to desired families, how administrators describe the thematic focus of the school, steering away parents during enrollment stages, communicating to them that the school does not have the services or curriculum their child needs, and requiring parents to volunteer in schools (Jabbar, 2016; LaFleur, 2016; Mommandi & Welner, 2021). In countries like Spain or Belgium in which public-private-partnership schools compose a large share of school options, school fees also served to keep away families that did not fit the profile of the school (Bonal & Zancajo, 2018).

Ball and colleagues' studies (Ball et al., 1996; Ball & Vincent, 1998), indicate that school choice neither reflects a rational decision nor results from how social structures shape offer and demand. According to them, school choice is a sociocultural and local practice. That is, "educational preferences are constructed in the context of symbolic and material restrictions that affect different social groups differently, and also acknowledging the actors' capacity to construct their own educational preferences" (Moschetti & Verger, 2020, p. 67). Informed by a sociocultural perspective on school choice, bounded rationality (Ben-Porath, 2009, 2010) assumes that parental decision-making processes are bounded by cognitive and social constraints. Thus, bounded rationality considers not only parents' preferences and rationales when making school decisions (e.g., academic quality of the school) but their access to information and school strategies to supply services to selected parents.

Yet, there are structural aspects that affect parental choice that merit further examination in a theory of bounded rationality. Research informed by bounded rationality has attended to race and class in terms of social capital and networks and resources available to parents (Moschetti & Verger, 2020) Such research has given limited attention to the structural power of race and class that has



produced unjust and highly segregated geographies in urban centers around the globe (Harvey, 2006) and to how education markets accelerate such inequities (Reay & Lucey, 2003; Yoon, 2015, 2017). There are questions that beg for a more nuanced understanding of space within a bounded rationality framework. For instance, how do the historically evolving geographies of urban centers shape parents' engagement with school choice? How do the intersections of ableist, racist, and classist policy practices bound parents' experiences in education markets? How is their knowledge and perceptions of schools shaped by their experiences in urban spaces?

Thus, research has offered competing theories of the processes involved in parental choice, which has resulted in contradictory findings that fueled debates about school choice. But that is not the only area of controversy regarding market-driven educational policies. In the next section, I turn to discuss competing research on the consequences of such policies regarding promoting or maintaining and exacerbating educational exclusion.

### **Market-driven inclusion or exclusion?**

Research on market driven reforms has represented contradictory findings in relation to just and equitable school access and outcomes. On the one hand, research indicates that market-driven reforms have open new forms of inclusion through the diversification of educational options. Students with disabilities in the United States, for instance, are more likely to be included in the general education classroom in a charter school than in a traditional public school regardless of their disability diagnosis (Rhim et al., 2015). Studies also indicate that students with disabilities are more likely to exit special education services (Winters, 2015) and obtain better educational outcomes in charter schools than in traditional public schools (CREDO, 2015; Setren, 2015), and less likely to be identified with a learning disability than in traditional public schools (Winters et al., 2017). Other studies have documented the practices of charter schools that had succeeded in providing meaningful inclusive educational experiences (e.g., Downing et al., 2004; Drame & Frattura, 2011).

On the other hand, research has demonstrated how market forms of educational delivery have generated new and contributed existent forms of inequities and exclusion. Since their inception, charter schools in the United States have enrolled lower proportions of students with dis/abilities when compared to traditional public schools (Barnard-Brak et al., 2018; Rhim & Kothari, 2018; US Government Accountability Office [GAO], 2012). Studies have also indicated that charter schools tend to enroll low proportions of students with more extensive support needs who require more resources, specialized teacher training, and smaller teacher student rations (Bacon, 2019; Garcy, 2011; Waitoller et al., 2017).

Further, researchers found that marketized forms of educational services engage in *pushout practices* (Mommandi & Welner, 2021; Waitoller, 2020). Pushout practices are mechanisms used by schools to indicate implicitly or explicitly to parents/caregivers that they should move their children to another school.

Schools, for instance, tell parents that the school is not the best “choice” for their students, counseling them to a more fitting form of educational delivery (Waitoller, 2020). Not identifying students for special education services, not providing the services required in the student’s IEP, and limited teacher expertise in working with students with disabilities also serve as mechanisms to counsel out unwanted students (Waitoller, 2020). In addition, applying repetitive disciplinary measures to students (e.g., suspensions) for minor infractions result in eroding relationships with parents and students who later decide to move to another school (Waitoller, 2020; Waitoller et al., 2019). Interestingly, charter schools praised for their academic outcomes have the highest rate of suspension for Black students and students with disabilities (Losen et al., 2016). Research has also indicated that parents of students with disabilities can be steered away from schools even before they apply to them (Bacon, 2019; Jabbar, 2016; Jennings, 2010; Jessen, 2012; Mommandi & Welner, 2021).

Thus, research has presented a complex and contradictory picture of marketized forms of education delivery like charter schools or other forms of PPPs. On the one hand, they portrayed parents as individual and rational consumers, while on the other hand, research indicates that structural factors play an important role in shaping school decisions. Bounded rationality theories have not provided a nuanced understanding of how the geographical histories of urban centers play a central role in parents’ decision making as well as in the structural factors bounding them. In addition, research has presented mixed and contradictory results about the potential of school choice to expand equitable access, positive educational outcomes, and just participation for students with disabilities. To resolve these contradictory findings, I offer the concept of the education marketSpace.

### The education marketSpace

The concept of the education marketSpace emerges from recent research published in *Excluded by Choice: Urban Students with Disabilities in the Education Marketplace* (Waitoller, 2020). The concept aims to capture the complex experiences of parents in education markets in urban centers, where the lines of education policy and urban development are blurry (Lipman, 2011).

Note the change of the term *marketplace* for the term *marketSpace*, with a capital S. This is not due to a typo. There has been a long-standing debate in geography about the difference between the terms *space* and *place*. Geographers have used the notion of space to explain the material aspects of geography (e.g., the location of a building or a street) and the notion of place to examine the ideal aspects of geography, such as how people assign meaning or imagine materials spaces (Cresswell, 2015; Massey, 1994; Merrifield, 1993; Tuan, 1977). Cresswell (2015, p. 16) states that “The idea of space has been distinguished from place as a fact of life without meaning. When humans produce meaning out of a particular space and then become attached to it, space becomes place”. Research on the marketization of education also reflects this

dichotomy (Waitoller & Lubienski, 2019). Some research focuses on the material aspects of space, such as distance to school and how school options are structured in a geographical area, while other research has focused on how parents make meanings of schools.

Merrifield (1993, p. 516) warns us that such a dichotomized view creates a “Cartesian philosophical straitjacket” that cannot account for how the material and ideal are dialectically related and are indivisible from each other. Merrifield (1993, p. 521) utilizes the example of quantum theory to criticize the space/place dichotomy: “quantum theory echoes precisely these notions: all matter, recall, is a particle (a concentrated entity in space) and a wave (a dispersive non-spatially concentrated process) at one and the same time”. Matter is both particle and wave. Similarly, both place and space are unified in the process of producing space. A complete examination needs to account for how the parts (i.e., space and place) relate to each other, forming the whole.

Soja (1996), basing his work on Lefebvre (1991), compels us to focus not in one or the other, but in the dialectic between space and place. Both Soja and Lefebvre critique the dualism of real/imagined, objective/subjective, and material/mental. To overcome such dualisms, Lefebvre (1991) proposes three dialectically interrelated moments in the production of space: spatial practice (i.e., the perceived space), representations of space (i.e., the conceived space), and spaces of representation (i.e., the lived space). Spatial practice is the perceived material space open to description and measurement that is appropriated, dominated, and used. It is the traditional focus of attention of geographical analysis, and Soja (1996) calls it *first space*. The actual material structure of a school building organized in different kinds of classrooms, the distance to a school, the physical barrier between a school and someone’s home such as a highway, or a stairway without an elevator that keeps a wheelchair user from accessing the building are all examples of first spaces. First space is sometimes referred to as “real space” (Cresswell, 2015).

The representations of space refer to the conceptualized and mental space. It is the space perceived and imagined. Soja (1996) calls it *second space*. Second space analyses assume that spatial understanding is primarily produced through discourse and representations of space; it is ideational and symbolic in that it is made up of mental projections of the physical space. Parents’ sense making of neighborhoods and schools are examples of second space. Thus, second space is related to notions of place (Cresswell, 2015).

Finally, spaces of representation (or lived space) are the spaces directly lived and experiences by people. Soja (1996) calls them the *third space*.<sup>1</sup> Third space is the experienced space, which is distinct from but also encompasses the other two spaces; it is where the material and symbolic are made sense of and acted on; it is where urban Space is lived. The third space is also the space of resistance and the social struggle through which space is shaped. Soja (1996) argued that it is the “strategic location” to study the dialectic between the material and perceived space. It is Space with a capital S. It is, thus, the education marketSpace.

The education marketSpace is a dialectical unit that encompasses (a) policies, practices, and discourses, fraught with the intersections of classism, ableism, and racism, that contribute to the formation of urban and educational Spaces; and (b) students', parents', and teachers' experiences of those spaces that form their perceptions and emotions, shaping their school decisions and social struggles. In turn, such decisions and struggles shape the educational marketSpace, making it both a product and a process. In the following sections, I describe two advantages of using this concept that can serve to overcome the limitations of the literature I pointed to earlier in the chapter: (a) that choosing a school is a spatial phenomenon; (b) the inclusion/exclusion paradox in the education marketSpace. I provide examples of the stories of my book *Excluded by Choice* to illustrate these advantages.

### *Choosing a school is a spatial phenomenon*

The first advantage of the concept marketSpace is that it contributes to resolving the contradiction between parental choice as an individualistic rational act or as a decision determined by social structures and school offers. As shown, parental school choice is not merely a psychological phenomenon based on a rational and individualistic decision, nor is it merely a social phenomenon dictated by the types of school offerings and recruitment and marketing strategies. Choosing a school is a spatial phenomenon. Parents and other stakeholders (such as policymakers and school administrators) engage with school choice as "spatial beings" (Soja, 1996). Their perceptions of and experiences in neighborhoods and their encompassed schools are shaped by the production of urban Space fraught with structural racism, classism, and ableism and the deep emotions that those Spaces evoke on people.

The parents who take stage in *Excluded by Choice* mentioned four factors shaping their school choices: perceptions of and experiences with safety, economic disinvestment in neighborhoods and school, destabilization of schools (e.g., closing traditional neighborhood schools and open marketized forms of schooling), and poor special education services. Such factors reflected parents' perceptions and experiences in urban spaces shaped by:

1. Uneven economic investment from the city government inscribed in the state-sanctioned racially and class segregated geographies of the city.
2. Austerity measures that slashed special education funds and services.
3. School policies and practices that segregate students with disabilities in separate classrooms.
4. Deficit discourses of communities of color and students with disabilities.

Uneven economic investment, Harvey (2006) explains, is produced by the rolling back of the welfare state and its social provisions, including austerity measures that have slashed funds for schools and special education services, and the rollout of public-private partnerships for the delivery of social services

(e.g., charter schools). As Janet, a Black parent of a student identified with autism, explains,

The neighborhood is trying to improve. It's trying to, but just too many schools closing, and that's kind of making it kind of bad for the parents and others, too. Because they have to travel far. You have to get a bus, get transportation, take a bus to a different school that's not your district. Then they are making these other public schools into charter school. Instead of hiring new, qualified teachers, they just making these public schools into charter schools. It is kind of rough.

(Waitoller, 2020, p. 47)

Like Janet, the parents of *Excluded by Choice* experienced school closings and deficit-laden school accountability labels (for example, “failing school” and “school on probation”), which pathologized not just schools but the students and families of color attending them and, by extension, the urban Spaces they inhabit. Parents’ perceptions of the academic quality and safety of the schools in their neighborhood were shaped by such uneven economic investment and deficit labels.

Further, parents’ experiences with special education services were shaped by Chicago’s long history of segregating students with disabilities, which, to an extent, is permitted by federal legislation (Waitoller, 2020). For instance, Rebecca’s son, Joel, was placed in a segregated classroom, she explained,

It was time for his placement in 1st grade. They wanted to put him in an autism-concentrated classroom. I didn't agree. He didn't really do anything wrong except for being who he was, and they just felt that they couldn't teach him there. My whole argument on it was the fact that they could. His differences weren't something that could not be accommodated within that [general] classroom, within the school.

(Waitoller, 2020, p. 37)

After fighting the segregated placement for 2 years, she decided to move Joel to a charter school. “I was done. I was done with public schools,” she said.

Thus, it is not possible to fully understand parents’ perceptions of a school or neighborhood without understanding how those spaces are produced through discourse, policy, and practice. And it is not possible to fully understand how space is produced without understanding how the people who are producing and shaping such Spaces perceive them.

Not all of the Black and Latinx parents of students with disabilities in *Excluded by Choice* experienced the education marketSpace in the same form. They experienced complex forms of exclusion due to their geographical *and* social (i.e., race, class, and disability) location. Parents living in areas of persistent extreme poverty and serious economic decline in the city of Chicago experienced economic disinvestment occurring in neighborhoods with a history

of state-sanctioned residential and school racial segregation. Interacting with these racist structural forms of exclusion were structural forms of ableism such as limited financial and human resources in schools to provide learning, emotional, and behavioral support to students with disabilities. In addition, parents living in these areas of the city had been disproportionately affected by school closings, a direct result of accountability measures and competition among schools.

Interestingly, parents living in areas experiencing gentrification were still concerned about issues of safety due to the displacement of communities. Gentrification caused parents to move out of an area that was being economically invested in due to rising rent prices. In contrast, Black and Latinx parents living in middle-class areas were not concerned with safety issues, but they were concerned with segregating their children in a separate classroom.

Black and Latinx parents of students with disabilities made decisions according to their perceptions and experiences in precarious and unstable situations. Sometimes they engaged with and sometimes contested marketized forms of schooling through social struggle, which shaped the educational spaces in which they were involved. Their decisions to opt for one school over another was based on their experiences in and perceptions of the urban Spaces, including school Spaces, which were shaped by policies, practices, and discourses fraught with racism, ableism, and classism. They were Spatial, not merely cognitive or structural, decisions.

### *Inclusion/exclusion contradiction in the education marketSpace*

The term education marketSpace helps us to resolve the paradox of inclusion versus exclusion in marketized forms of education. At first, the parents of *Excluded by Choice* were welcomed and received with open arms in brand-new charter schools. Kendall, a Black mother of a student identified with ADHD, shared her experiences:

Let me tell you about the past experiences that I've had. I gave them quite a few examples as to what my son experienced and how bad of an experience it was. I'm like I don't wanna bring him there, and you guys are not equipped to deal with him. I began to let them know the behaviors that he had, the issues that we've had with the teachers. I just told them I don't wanna go through that anymore. They reassure me that they could do it. I mean they caught me maybe about three different times to recruit my children.

(Waitoller, 2020, p. 53)

As in the case of Kendall, charter schools invested substantially in marketing strategies to recruit parents. These new educational spaces ignited parents' hope. Charter schools were advertised to parents as having excellent academic outcomes. Some of these charter schools claimed, "100% of our graduates

have been admitted to 4-year colleges” (Waitoller, 2020, p. 57). Educational “inclusion” was marketed through educational Spaces produced by rollout capitalism, such as charter schools and their enveloped promises of inclusion in a safe and academically rigorous setting that could serve the individual needs of their children, for many of them in an inclusive manner.

Yet, this form of inclusion was selective and came at a high cost. Parents and their children with disabilities experienced four pushout practices in the charter schools: 1) inflexible and rigorous academic and discipline practices, (2) delay and/or denial of special education services, (3) lack of adequately trained personnel, and (4) suggestions that parents “choose” another school. Angela, for instance, expressed that she

got a call from the principal telling me that they weren’t going to be able to meet her needs ... She said that they didn’t have a nurse. They didn’t have a social worker. I’m like, are you just now finding this out? She called me back, and I explained to her—I said, “I’ll be up there tomorrow, to get her things”. She was like, “Well, that’s your choice”. Now I’m confused. You just told me she can’t come there, now you’re telling me it’s my choice. I said, “Well, which is it?” She said, “Well, I’m just telling you that you need to think about what is best for Melissa”.

(Waitoller, 2020, p. 88)

Parents like Angela were asked to make the “best” choice for their children, though there was little to choose for them. Educational exclusion was disguised under the cloth of the illusion of choice.

Half of the parents (12) that took stage in *Excluded by Choice* left the charter school and had to engage again with an education marketSpace. Yet, pushout practices’ consequences were more severe than students exiting schools. Pushout practices had severe consequences for students’ mental health. Students’ problematic behaviors escalated; they experienced depression and anxiety attacks. For some, their mental health worsened to the point where they were moved to a specialized school for students experiencing mental or behavioral crisis. Kymberly shared that due to the high academic pressure coupled with little academic and emotional supports, her son Darius

“started biting off his fingernails and pulling his hair out”. Darius “bit his entire pinky fingernail off in school and had pulled two of his dreadlocks out” when he “did not reach this certain goal on a test”, and consequently could not attend to a class celebration.

(Waitoller, 2020, p. 120)

David Mitchell reminds us that “Any openings neoliberalism creates for acceptance of formerly excluded populations come at a cost” (Mitchell, 2015, p. II). Black and Latinx students with disabilities had to comply with high cost and ableist parameters of “inclusion”, or they needed to “choose” another

school. In market-driven forms of addressing educational exclusion, being included is impossible or has a high cost, while being excluded is framed as a matter of individual choice.

In addition, market-informed forms of inclusion are selective. They “included” some and excluded others. Students can be “included” if their needs do not require substantial changes from school practices and policies. The students of *Excluded by Choice*, for instance, needed to endure, follow hard disciplinary measures, and comply with highly demanding academic work, all while receiving limited academic, emotional, and behavioral supports. Only students who can fit within these learning conditions could be included; students who cannot do so could choose to be included somewhere else in the education marketSpace.

So, there are children with disabilities that can adapt to the charter school practices or be provided with some accommodations to be “included” and achieve some positive academic outcomes, such as graduating from school, increasing academic achievement in standardized assessments, or even enrolling in college. As discussed earlier in the chapter, there is evidence that some students with disabilities have positive academic outcomes in charter school (CREDO, 2015; Setren, 2015). Such students with disabilities become the new “tolerable”, while the rest occupy a further marginal position, what Mitchell (2015) called *peripheral embodiments*: students who cannot be included because of the narrow normative expectations of what it means to be a student that inform school practices. Interestingly, this selective form of “inclusion” is appealing to parents and ignites a sense of hope that better educational experiences are reachable after so many prior frustrations with schools. While charter schools advertise their rates of success with slogans such as “100 % access to college”, parents imagine that a student like their children will experience educational success. That is, those who are “included” reify the efficacy of market-driven forms of “inclusion” (Mitchell, 2015). Yet, students who become peripheral embodiments, like students in *Excluded by Choice*, experience further marginalization and even, in some cases, pay the cost of “inclusion” with their own mental health.

The irony is that the practices that produce a charter school Space as enticing for parents due to creating the perception of safety and outstanding academic outcomes are the same practices that exclude some students with disabilities. My colleagues and I call it the “Irony of Rigor” (Waitoller et al., 2019). Charter schools’ pushout practices were informed by and serve to sustain the market identity of the charter schools, a reputation that needs to be preserved to survive in the education marketSpace. Thus, charter schools that build their identity around strict disciplinary and academic rigor are in a double bind. They either push out students with disabilities to preserve their market edge, or they change their practices, which may change a core aspect of their market identity that is seductive to prospective parents.

Education marketSpace institutions, such as charter schools, relate students with disabilities and other minority populations in paradoxical terms (Waitoller et al., 2019): students with disabilities are desirable commodities but also



disposable (Goodley, 2014). Students with disabilities offer new opportunities for market expansion, as they can boost enrollments and revenues in charter schools. Charter schools offer the services to “fix” students to benefit the neoliberal design and become part of the coveted market economy. The educational needs of some groups (e.g., students with disabilities and racial minorities) offer the potential of new products and developments (such as charter schools). Most charter schools in the city of Chicago are in areas experiencing historical disinvestment, racial segregation, and poor educational options, particularly for those students with disabilities (Waitoller, 2020). Charter schools were framed as a solution to the lack of educational opportunities in those areas of the city. So, on the one hand, students with disabilities and other minoritized students offer charter schools the possibility to exist and to market themselves. On the other hand, students are perceived as threats to the core identity of the charter school and need to be disciplined and corrected.

The education marketSpace offers an ongoing solution to its own contradiction of including and excluding. After the parents of *Excluded by Choice* experienced exclusion, despair and optimism, and frustrations, they were offered the choice to decide to be “included” in a school that better fits their children’s educational needs. The solution of the education marketSpace to exclusion is to provide a diversification of schooling options in which parents can act as consumers and choose the best option for their child. The narrative of marketized forms of education tells parents, “Don’t worry, even when you experience educational exclusion repeatedly, there is always the choice of another school”. Yet, in the education marketSpace, opportunities to be included are limited, are selective, and come with a high cost.

## **Conclusion**

Market-driven policies have been one of the most contested global educational policies. Their promises such as increased access to quality educational opportunities for marginalized communities and improved educational outcomes of all students overlap with some of the goals of inclusive education. Yet, researchers have found evidence to both support and defy aspects of these policies. In this chapter, I offered the concept of the education marketSpace to make sense of and to resolve the contradictory research findings on marketized forms of education. The education marketSpace challenges the assumption that school choice is an individual and rational act. Choosing a school is a spatial phenomenon. Parents engage in school choice amid the dialectics between perceiving and producing material space and between space as a product and a process. In addition, I explain the inclusion-versus-exclusion paradox of marketized forms of education. The education marketSpace offers a selective and high-cost form of education access, which signals the limited capacity of marketized forms of education to fulfill the goals of a radical and just inclusive education agenda.

## Note

- 1 Though the names are the same and the concepts have some resemblance, Soja's "third space" should not be confused with Bhabha's "third space". While the former focuses on debates in geography, the latter focuses on issues of cultural identity.

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## 8 Revisiting Kracauer's perspectives on space and inclusion/exclusion

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### **Introduction: Space and inclusion/exclusion**

Spaces can be seen as a physical-aesthetic expression of social relations—as artifacts produced and materialized in the social world. At the same time, spaces can be seen as social spaces that are co-determined and shaped by these physical artifacts (cf. Frank et al., 2008; Löw, 2000). Against the background of this relational perspective on space and spatiality, this chapter asks how exclusionary spaces can be made visible. In doing so, it is assumed that spatial practices cannot be seen through directly in a pre-conscious way, but that an analytical perspective is needed that tries to work out exclusion and marginalization processes under the surface of everyday practice. For this purpose, it seems worthwhile to introduce Kracauer's sociological perspective on space and marginalization, as he endeavored to combine critical diagnosis of time and methodological consideration to make it visible.

So far, micro-sociological and visual perspectives on space and spatiality associated with Siegfried Kracauer have only peripherally found its way into social and educational science and have rarely been discussed at the interface of space and inclusion/exclusion. It therefore makes sense to analyze spatial structures and practices for producing and processing difference in education by drawing on Kracauer's perspective. It is assumed that in their notches and niches, their cultural-historical (re)formations, educational organizations might perpetuate social as well as physical spaces to produce and maintain inclusion and exclusion (cf. Schroer, 2008). The inertia of spaces can reveal the scars of segregation—especially for subjects who are classified as deviant or deficient. For spaces are not “noisy”, they do not announce exclusion on a daily basis; but they provide the firm, solid, and materialized ground for tacit practices of exclusion. They repeatedly impose “conditions of inclusion” (Weisser, 2017, p. 146) that people must fulfill as prerequisites of participation.

At first, I will give insight into Kracauer's work, his developments of analyzing space or thinking of space, including his specific contribution to what might be termed as an early “visual turn”. In order to illuminate the historical context and thereby make clear the interconnectedness of his life and work, Siegfried Kracauer as a person and central aspects of his spatial theory will be

introduced. While often referred to, his spatial approaches do not present as a grand theory or as a coherent spatial theoretical model, but as a particularized heuristic of a reconstruction of the social shape of space.

For this purpose, he designed the term of the historical “anteroom”, which he first used in the context of his work “History: The Last Things Before the Last” (Kracauer, 2009 [1971], p. 209):

One may define the area of historical reality, like that of photographic reality, as an anteroom area. Both realities are of a kind which does not lend itself to being dealt with in a definite way. The peculiar material in these areas eludes the grasp of systematic thought; nor can it be shaped in the form of a work of art. ... They [The Statements, A.K.] share their inherently provisional character with the material they record, explore, and penetrate.

The provisionality Kracauer describes along historical as well as photographic phenomena is emphasized as a necessity for a fluid, evolving science beyond dogmas, ideologies, and entrenched schemata. Similar to Bateson (1985), who sees scientific knowledge as the result of an equal combination of rigorous and loose thinking, Kracauer argues for an “anteroom” in scientific engagement—ergo, between a methodological rigor and an impressionistic openness, between a disciplinary affiliation and interdisciplinary connections.

To conclude this chapter, I will eventually excavate how Kracauer’s thinking and his approach to the spatiality of social life could be made fruitful for a reconstructive analysis of inclusion and exclusion in educational organizations—focusing on visual perspectives and artifact research.

### **Biographical introductions to Kracauer’s life and work**

Kracauer was born into a mercantile family in 1889. He was interested in questions of philosophy and sociology from an early age, but for material reasons he initially aimed to study architecture. He earned a doctorate in architecture and then worked as an architect for some time. In this period around 1915, during a phase of World War I in which he was also temporarily drafted as a soldier, he established his first connections with intellectuals in Frankfurt, especially with the Jewish intellectual group around Leo Löwenthal and Nehemiah Nobel. In 1921 he joined the editorial staff of the feuilleton of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, a newspaper from Frankfurt (first in Frankfurt am Main, later in Berlin), which he influenced for years with his essayistic cityscapes, as for example summarized in his works *The Mass Ornament* (1963) and *Streets in Berlin and Elsewhere* (1964). These miniatures already hinted at the perspective of analysis as noted by Honneth (2006, p. 286, transl. AK): “The almost phenomenological departure from visible, physical surface phenomena, the tracing of such phenomena to the tendencies of socioeconomic change, finally the philosophical illumination of change in the light of a comprehensive, materialist concept of history”. During this period, other

connections were made, especially with the intellectuals later named as the Frankfurt School: Theodor W. Adorno, Ernst Bloch, Walter Benjamin, and Erich Fromm. Although an intense intellectual friendship developed with Adorno (as he was continually offered support by him during the period of repression and emigration), Kracauer's positioning with respect to the Frankfurt School or the Institute for Social Research was characterized throughout his life by an ambivalent distancing (cf. Später, 2019).

In what is considered the first empirical-sociological study, *The Salaried Masses* (1929), Kracauer worked out the "ideological homelessness" of the local middle class using the example of the newly forming professional class of white-collar workers in Germany. In a combination of spatial observations, data documentation, and interviews, elements of qualitative social research emerge here for in-depth analysis of middle-class practices "without qualities" (Reitz, 2017). With a detailed look at the people, their activities, things, and spaces, a perspective emerges according to which "reality is a construction of which one gains sociological insight only through the analytical documentation of its supporting elements" (Honneth, 2006, p. 287, transl. AK).

The increasing threat to the Jewish population in Germany by the National Socialists since the beginning of the 1930s led to a caesura in 1933. Kracauer emigrated first to Paris and later to America. This time was in many respects a time of privation, accompanied by financial hardship, a lack of recognition of social position, and the smashing and disregard of intellectual works. In this situation, Kracauer's perspective on the seemingly neglected and overlooked objects and people took shape in his scientific work. Thus, social outsidership, to which many emigrants say they were exposed, was combined with a scholarly focus on those very people in the "shadow of society", who—in a mosaic-like collection of small reflections—can become a "conundrum of contemporary analysis" (Witte, 2017, p. 337).

Posthumously, his work initially received little attention, but it has since been edited as a complete edition, and it has enjoyed increased reception in transdisciplinary terms, particularly in the recent past in the German discourse, including the context of cultural and literary studies as well as (spatial) sociological analyses (cf. among others Ahrens et al., 2017; Biebl et al., 2019; Später, 2017). A reception of his theoretical and methodological preliminary work in educational science and especially inclusion and exclusion research has so far been lacking. Especially against this background, it is the aim of this chapter to give insight into Kracauer's theoretical approach and to make it fruitful for research in educational science. Following these brief biographical remarks, the following section presents central methodological premises of Kracauer's work.

### **Kracauer's analytical perspective of the exoticism of everyday life**

The anchoring point of Kracauer's scientific perspective is the distinction between a performed and presented surface structure of social action and a social reality located in the hidden—on the backstage, so to speak. This background



of social action, according to Kracauer, is not directly accessible and requires micro-perspective analyses that address precisely those appearances and phenomena that are found in the everyday and are rarely (critically) brought into view. Following Walter Benjamin (1991 [1930], p. 116), Kracauer likes to see himself in the image of a “rag-and-bone collector” of modernity (cf. also Später, 2019; Rahden, 2019), less interested in the radiantly exotic objects but in the profane, seemingly outdated in the “lowlands of everyday life” (Schroer, 2007, p. 6), in order to perform a material construction of social action in these neglected sites of evidence (cf. Biebl, 2019). Kracauer gains the impressions for this from everyday situations and observations that arise in the ephemeral, or else materialize in the pictorial, e.g., in photographs or films.

Kracauer examines the interplay and interrelatedness of things and people and thus approaches a reconstruction of the spatial order of society as it has become re-objectified in the material of society. His perspective on space and spatiality is thus a constructivist one, which at first apparently focuses on the forms of expression and appearance of physical space but sees these as having emerged from the social. Here he meets the spatial turn’s understanding of space. Thus, “the material conditions of space [are] to be seen as an objectified form of expression of social action in architecture, which is, however, fractured by temporality and bent under the demands of change” (Hummrich, 2009, p. 4, transl. AK).

### **Kracauer’s transdisciplinary explorations to capture the “reality” behind things**

Now, under a new glass roof and adorned in marble, the former arcade looks like the vestibule of a department store. The shops are still there, but its postcards are mass-produced commodities, its World Panorama has been superseded by a cinema, and its Anatomical Museum has long ceased to cause a sensation. All the objects have been struck dumb. They huddle timidly behind the empty architecture, which, for the time being, acts completely neutral but may later spawn who knows what.

(Kracauer, 1963b, p. 37, transl. AK)

Kracauer can be described as a border crosser between scientific disciplines (Schroer, 2007), concerning several aspects: First, there is the difficulty of locating Kracauer’s work between sociology, cultural studies, architecture, and philosophy and the lack of reception. In particular, his essayistic remarks (see the aforementioned example from *The Mass Ornament*) are interspersed with dense descriptions in a literary style, with an unmistakable social-theoretical classification. His disciplinary universalism may also have promoted him to an “in-between space” (Irigaray, 2006, p. 244), from which he sought to grasp the “ideological homelessness” that he attributed to prevailing social conditions. Looking back on his literary and scholarly work, he subsumes his seemingly eclectic studies as an attempt to “rehabilitate those goals and behaviors

that still lack a name and are consequently overlooked or misjudged ... a region of reality that, despite all that has been written about it, is still for the most part terra incognita" (Kracauer, 1963e, p. 57). With the goal of rescuing the real (Biebl et al., 2019), he sought to reveal the reality behind things—as an analyst who tried to mediate the poles of constructivism and realism theoretically as well as methodologically, in a “constructivist realism”, so to speak.

For this purpose, he placed “realistic” things in the foreground of his analyses. He looked for profane situations and artifacts in everyday life and analyzed these against the background of the assumption that social conditions are a materialized or aestheticized shape of the prevailing spirit of the times, commonly classified as “modern”. He oriented himself to philosophical (Kierkegaard) and sociological preliminary work (Simmel; Marx) as well as to literary theoretical writings (including Peter Lukacz's *Theory of the Novel*), which have in common that they identify a separation between an objective material culture and a subjective culture of the individual. This separation is to be specified differently in terms of contemporary history and is characterized by Kracauer at the exit from idealism to capitalism (Kracauer, 1993, p. 414, transl. AK):

During the last decades, Germany has experienced a tremendous material increase. But the inner prosperity did not keep pace with this outer prosperity, indeed, it was often nipped in the bud. ... The life of most people takes place within the stale social conventions and the professions; these are the only supra-individual forms that grant a fixed goal and certain possibilities of development. If one removed oneself from their sphere, one stepped into empty space.

While he saw this space as a de-cleared space, previously occupied by religious beliefs, he thereby diagnosed society, in its way of life “overformed” by work, with an “ideological homelessness” (borrowing from Lukasz's “transcendental homelessness”). Kracauer thus conceived—in topographical terms—an opening up and qualitative determination of the inner life of human beings, which consisted of empty, undeveloped spaces. He saw these vacant, cleared areas, so to speak, which stretched out behind the staged busyness of people, as a product of the local economic relations of production and the ways of life of people that went along with them (cf. his study *The Salaried Masses*, 1929). With this diagnosis of the present, which entails a cultural and economic alienation that “man behind the machines is becoming a machine himself” (Roth, 2010 [1923], p. 128), he saw himself in illustrious company with other intellectuals who predicted a spiritual profanation and mechanization. They saw the harbingers of an economized culture permeating all areas of life.

Thus, Kracauer formed a critical materialism, with whose theoretical means he criticized the “boundless, arbitrary individualism” (Frisby, 1984, p. 122) in a fragmentary, particularized and ultimately dis-sociated world.

Thus, not without a certain world-weariness (cf. Schröter, 1980), he ultimately held the separation of cognition and existence—advanced by scientific and capitalist “reason”—responsible for the disintegration and incoherence of intellect and social life practices. Hopeful and defiant, he saw the real as still existing, only covered by a “blanket of snow” of everyday social practices (cf. Kracauer, 1963b, p. 23): “But if the real is also forgotten, it is nevertheless not erased” (Kracauer, 1990, p. 304, transl. AK; cf. Ahrens et al., 2017). So, he chose the empirical approach of micro-perspective reconstruction of the underlying reality of the everyday world and its aesthetic means presented in it.

Kracauer focused on the description and condensation of everyday, seemingly mundane things without the means of sociological conceptualizations. He aimed at sociological and literary descriptions in microscopic detail, characterized by the rejection of rash abstract conceptualizations. The focus on the practices of everyday life, their concepts, routines, and rites can be interpreted as ethnomethodologically informed. The engagement with particular and everyday things occurs in this context against the background of the assumption of social contingency, i.e., that contemporary capitalist culture in its intellectual indifference is woven into, permeates, constitutes, and, as it were, controls all spaces of society (cf. Waitoller, 2024, Chapter 7 in this volume). It seems to be hidden in all thingly, aesthetic expressions, in the body of society as well as the body of the individual (cf. Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2016; Restayn et al., 2022).

In documentary style, Kracauer (2017 [1929], p. 97) writes, for example, in his work *The Salaried Masses* a passage that he calls “Asylum for the Homeless”. There he describes the habits of the new class of the salaried masses and elaborates the dialectal relationship between monotonous work and recreation time in pubs:

The exact counterpart of the office machine, however, is the colorful world. Not the world as it is, but as it appears in the hits. A world that is cleaned of the dust of everyday life down to the last corner, as if with a vacuum cleaner. The geography of homeless asylums is born out of the hit song. Although he has only a vague knowledge of the place, the panoramas are mostly precisely executed ... The stay between these walls that mean the world can be defined as a social journey to paradise. ... You don't sit up here, you travel. “Don't lean out!” is written on the train windows, through which one looks at all kinds of sunny postcards. In reality, they are wall panels, and the lifelike corridor of an international sleeper train is nothing more than a long narrow corridor connecting two Mohammedan halls. The floods of light invoked in the department store propaganda script have an effect throughout the arrangement. ... When the waiter turns off the lights, of course, the eight-hour day shines right back in.

Continuing, he concludes:

Under the pressure of the ruling society, they [the pubs] become homeless asylums in a figurative sense. In addition to their actual purpose, they are given the other one of banishing the employees to the place desired by the upper class—and distracting them from critical questions, to which, incidentally, they hardly feel a strong pull.

(Kracauer, 2017 [1929], p. 97)

Hence, from the description of everyday manifestations with the aim of bringing out an underlying reality, Kracauer succeeded, among other things, in decoding symbols of the world of work, culture, and leisure. Furthermore, along the American dance group Tillergirls, their synchronicity, tempo, and precise movements, he worked out the harbingers of an economic order designed for mass production. He concludes: “The mass ornament is the aesthetic reflex of the rationality to which the prevailing economic system aspires” (Kracauer, 1963e, p. 54, transl. AK).

In summary, Kracauer's approach of mass ornaments can be seen as an attempt to discover mass phenomena in social entities (both material and social) from which an underlying principle can be deduced. Through distance and alienation, the approach aims to decipher visual manifestations (e.g., looking at geometric forms) as ornaments of a capitalist production society that is self-purpose. While Kracauer's analytical exploration of mass ornaments is developed closely along Marxian theoretical perspectives on economic production processes, the methodological principle of distancing and visualizing socially produced symbols, artifacts, and forms of action can be seen as a general methodological approach.

### **“Attention as a state of exception”: Spatiotemporal surface phenomena**

Kracauer's decision to orient toward the “material reality of an unrevealed everyday world” (Frisby, 1989, p. 119) and not to strive for a retreat into the abstract heights of sociological-philosophical grand theories can be read as an anticipation of a research perspective to be defined later in ethnographic and praxeological terms, which reveals the general in the specific. The fact that essayistic images of the seemingly profane everyday world served him for his critical, contemporary-analytical reflections (cf. Frisby, 1989, p. 133) may at first come as a surprise, since sociology as a science, which had only just begun to develop, had not previously known a “small form” of the kind that was common in literary studies. In the sense of an aesthetic and almost photographic procedure, however, these descriptions served him to spatially frame inconspicuous surface expressions of social relations. The starting point was—as exemplified in his essay *The Mass Ornament*—observable phenomena of the everyday world. But what exactly distinguishes his view of the

everyday? How does he arrive at his socio-critical conclusions, using the scientific instruments of materialist theory only to a limited extent? The reason is that Kracauer sees the detective moment of uncovering given especially in everyday places, since in his view these “exhibit the least solidification” (Kracauer, 19, p. 76). They contain—insofar as one digs beneath the surface of the presented reality—the particular. In a dialectical manner, then, he identifies the profane everyday as the place that social analysis has so far been criminally least concerned with and formulates the necessity of uncovering precisely this “exoticism of everyday life” (Kracauer, 1971, p. 11). His “sharpened attention to the unnoticed inconspicuous—and that is not least: theoretically still unmastered—phenomena [is] not an end in itself ... but a means, a method, to trace the contradictions and conflicts of our social existence” (Mülder, 1985, p. 95). Thus, the tracing of these phenomena is not to be seen as resolving social grievances to frictionlessness—but rather as uncovering overall social and contemporary historical tensions of modernity, to which people of specific working classes, milieus, etc., see themselves exposed. Like a “non-solution” (Heindl & Robnik, 2021), the ambivalences remain unresolved, but are to be “disenchanted” through the analyses of their supposedly frictionless reality. The goal is thus rather to decipher the topographical ciphers of modernity by evoking, through consciously created analytical stimuli, a focused attention directed at everyday life, which represents a state of exception in the unconscious, monotonous, and habitualized practice of everyday life (cf. Schroer, 2009).

In order to put the everyday situations “at a distance”, analytical methods and means of his sociological and architectural training serve him. In his feuilletonistic images, the social positioning of persons is intertwined with the description of spatiotemporal conditions (places, contacts, etc.). Thus, topographically descriptive, almost photographic spatiotemporal images emerge (Nedregard, 1980, p. 78). Here, he primarily applies visual procedures that are supposed to put the superficial social reality “into the picture”. For the “surface analysis” (Mülder, 1985, p. 86), thus, dense descriptions of material as well as spatial entities come to light, in addition to relationships between persons. His constructions of space do not lean on a strictly measurable/verifiable scientific acquisition of knowledge, but feed on observations, impressions, and experiences. The “realistic analysis” serves the goal of capturing, in a precise, almost voyeuristic manner, the visible social sceneries and their concrete objects, thereby providing a materialized and spatial construction of the present, through which the specific in the everyday then successively becomes visible. The meaning of space/spatiality and thinghood is to be illustrated by an example from “About Proofs of Work—Construction of a Space”:

The proof of work itself is located three stairs up at the far end of this corner world and resembles an inverted land of milk and honey in that on the way to it one first has to work one’s way through the endless odor

zone of a people's food establishment. The fact that it gives the impression of a warehouse that has been relegated to the back of the store is quite correct. The unemployed also wait at the back of the current production process. They leave it as waste products, they are the leftovers. Under the prevailing circumstances, the space assigned to them can hardly have any other appearance than that of a junk room.

(Kracauer, 2009 [1971], p. 70, transl. AK)

Here it becomes clear that Kracauer is concerned with "the question of the place of the present in the process of history" (Mülder, 1985, p. 86). How are people and places influenced and shaped by contemporary historical conditions? For Kracauer, the constructions of spaces represent central analytical approaches to deciphering social reality: "Wherever the hieroglyph of any spatial image is deciphered, there the ground of social reality presents itself" (Kracauer, 1971, p. 70). While Kracauer did not develop a specific methodology, his methodological considerations show a clear proximity to visual procedures. He thus places visual phenomena at the starting point of his reconstructions. Therefore, the next section will focus on Kracauer's primacy of the visual.

### The primacy of the visual

Kracauer's micro-perspective analyses of society are primarily characterized by spatial images, i.e., fragmentary constructions of predominantly public spaces (cf. Döring, 2009). In depicting social phenomena, he is credited with an "optical feeling" that significantly assists him in uncovering what is hidden or real behind things (cf. Ahrens et al., 2017; Frisby, 1989). It is difficult to determine whether Kracauer's primacy of the visual stemmed from his professionalization as an architect, which preceded his studies in sociology and philosophy, or whether it was an inevitable methodological focus in his emerging praxeological perspective on knowledge. What is undisputed, however, is Kracauer's clear devotion to visual forms, which was reflected throughout his life in his preferred visits to the cinema as well as in his scholarly preoccupation with photography or film, evoking a specific spatial language (cf. Holste, 2006). His film-theoretical works "Caligari/Hitler" as well as "History of Film" bear witness to this, as does his essay "The Photography".

The latter will now serve as an example to introduce Kracauer's perspective of analysis, which is visual and especially focused on photographs. The essay "Photography", first published in 1927 in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, thematizes the representation and depiction of reality through monograms. Kracauer analyzes photographs as fragmentary spatiotemporal traditions. He thus places them in a relationship with memory (cf. Kracauer, 2017, p. 22, transl. AK): "Memory encompasses neither the entire spatial appearance nor the temporal course of an event. Compared to photography memory's records are full of gaps". Kracauer's intuition, then, is to examine

the medium of photography not in terms of its technical production or reproducibility, but in terms of the sociological gain in knowledge—and its limitation. He continues the “skewed” (Kracauer, 2017 [1929], p. 23) comparison of photography and memory and emphasizes, on the side of photography, the simultaneous-spatial and, for an excerpted point in time, complete capture of what is visible from a chosen position, while, on the side of memory, a selection of meaning takes place prior to pictorial memorization.

Nevertheless, he attributes the potential to photography to generate a “surplus of meaning” (Stumberger, 2010, p. 63) in the simultaneity of what is visually presented and through the culturally as well as socially integrated relations of production, which can be decoded for the purposes of historical or contemporary social research. Kracauer (2017 [1929], p. 26) thus sums up: “Beneath a person’s photograph, his history is buried as if under a blanket of snow”. To uncover this history, “the mere surface context offered by photography must be destroyed” (Kracauer, 2017 [1929], p. 27). What does Kracauer mean by this image of the blanket of snow? In Kracauer’s perspective of analysis, photography functioned as a medium of remembering and fixing reality, which, however, is not “there” per se, but must be “deciphered” from the photographs. “The expression decipherment implicitly presupposes the break between image and meaning: if the latter were (still) immediately vividly given, there would be no need for decipherment” (Mülder, 1985, p. 87, transl. AK). The represented is therefore to be deciphered regarding its construction, emergence, and later distribution. According to Stumberger (2010), this reference to the multifaceted network of relationships between producer, consumer, motive, and function forms the basis for the imagology (Dukic, 2012) and visual sociology (cf. Zuev & Krase, 2017) that will be constituted later, in which the backgrounds of the images, will also be analyzed (cf. Stumberger, 2010).

Thus, Kracauer criticizes that the visual turn that began in the 1950s and the increasing flood of images, especially in the media, merely amounted to an exuberant illustration of all motifs accessible through photography, in which photography would be the means of illustration, but not of reflexively grasping underlying social contexts. “The spatial continuum from the camera’s perspective covers the spatial appearance of the recognized object, the resemblance to it blurs the contours of its ‘history’” (Kracauer, 2017 [1929], p. 34). Thus, without deep analysis, the images of the everyday are merely products left along the way to manifest themselves for descendants.

For Kracauer, images offer an access, a “social dimension of viewing” photographs as well as film, since they evoke a past that “allows its transience in the act of projection to be at once forgotten and conspicuous” (Riedner, 2012, p. 1). This perspective of analysis, which is linked to the intention of inferring the structural code of the whole from a visual representation of the world and reality, has continued in recent years. Photographs and visual phenomena in general are increasingly used as objects of social science research, as they allow for an “interpretative indexing of visually mediated social realities” (Breckner & Raab, 2016, p. 5). This cannot be understood solely as a reaction

to an increasingly media-visual society that has found little representation in the methodological inventory of philology. Rather, visual studies conceive of the construction and perceptual value of visual phenomena as a culturally informed act, as Prinz and Reckwitz (2012, p. 193) elaborate: "Seeing, of course, is not to be understood pre-constructivistically as an imaging process, but as a perceptual activity guided by specific cultural, incorporated perceptual schemata". That viewing an image is not only an act of sensually and intellectually trained perception (*studium*) but also an accidental and arguably hidden cultural salience (*punctum*) is also exemplified by Roland Barthes (2019 [1985]) in his essayistic volume *Camera Lucida*. The production of an image thus constitutes not only an act of construction, but also its perception.

### **Implications for discourses on inclusion and exclusion in the context of education**

Although Kracauer does elaborate on education in his writings, his methodological approach can be thought of in terms of the development of educational organizations or educational discourses in general. Furthermore, the specificity of the methodological view that Siegfried Kracauer applies to the analysis of social conditions includes a proximity to phenomena of exclusion and marginalization. As Schroer puts it, a form of "unveiling sociology" is pursued and intended to bring to the fore the persons and spaces that have become "silent" over time (cf. Schroer, 2007, p. 11). Hence, the focus is on deciphering a socially perpetually produced veiling of power and inequality relations. The question is how "experiences of exclusion creep into everyday life" (Schroer, 2007, p.11, transl. AK). This perspective will be applied to the context of education in the remainder of this chapter.

Therefore, in the following, some methodological and theoretical characteristics and examples will be discussed:

- a. Inclusion/exclusion as spatial relations that are embedded in societal power relations.

It becomes apparent that Kracauer sees space as a social product that provides a viable access to symbolic contestations and thus to a changed, shifting, and changeable social structure. In this context—and closely related to Soja's understandings of space (cf. Soja, 1985), space is not to be seen as neutral or as a container for social action, but as powerfully produced and at the same time affecting social action. In Kracauer's images of space, such as in the miniatures "Analysis of a City Plan" (Kracauer, 1963a, p. 14) or "Farewell to the Linden Passage" (Kracauer, 1964), the incompleteness and processivity of spaces in particular comes to the fore, as it is also emphasized by Massey (2005). The assumption is that historical symbolic as well as performative confrontations led and lead to the production of space and spatiality in such a way that hegemonic ideas and positions are embedded in them (cf. also Walter Benjamin's *On the Concept of History*, 2010).



Thus, spaces are to be seen as historical materialized expressions as well as simultaneously as prefiguring forms of an expected future. Disposition over space thus leads to the shaping of views whereby every spatial action takes place as a “re-historicized” spatial practice in the sense of an appropriation of preformed (power-laden) material structures.

Moreover, Kracauer’s images of space, which illuminate material and social space in consistent simultaneity (cf. Kracauer, 1964), make clear their mutual influence. By taking a strict perspective on the social production of space, he makes clear that exclusion and marginalization cannot be seen as static or personal categories. Thus, his approach to space helps challenge essentializing categories of persons and to focus on the spatial production of these (as, for example, social models of disability do) (cf. Weisser, 2017). Furthermore, these phenomena are to be reconstructed by the means of social research, as power relations are veiled and not directly accessible.

- b. Everything that is otherwise denied and overlooked materializes in the spaces—visual reconstructions.

In order to make the exclusionary social conditions visible and to elaborate how social spaces prefigure the actions of persons, Kracauer sees material artifacts as a possible approach to describing and reconstructing social conditions. He thus assumes that social relations materialize, as it were, in spaces without the disruptive intervention of consciousness. Hence, everything that is otherwise denied and overlooked materializes in spaces.

This clearly points to an empirical approach, and Kracauer favors visualizing approaches for this purpose (see the previous section, “The Primacy of the Visual”), as they contain the potential to obtain a reflexive view of representations of space via artifacts and to decipher what thought is contained in the image (cf. Kracauer, 2017 [1963b]). This claim is also taken into account in later approaches to image interpretation in the change of analytical stance from iconography to iconology, to which Kracauer’s contemporary Panofsky in particular contributed (cf. Panofsky, 2006; cf. also Imdahl, 1996). Thus, on the one hand, it is possible to inquire in the image about the conditions of its being and origin—what it “unintentionally reveals”, so to speak (Stumberger, 2010, p. 63), and what cultural-historical deformations it carries within itself.

In doing so, it is not possible to analytically process the entire surface structure, but micro-perspectives on exemplary, seemingly everyday objects become necessary, from which the particular can then be inductively derived in a second step. Thus, a microanalytical research focus is placed on small forms with the goal of “diving into the world of things” (Schroer, 2007, p. 10) in order to make the practice of marginalization visible from the seemingly smooth surface structure. Spatial objects and practices of everyday life function as starting points to derive underlying mechanisms and principles of culture and social structure.

In relation to the spatial discourse around inclusion and exclusion, this approach gives indications that the distancing from an apparent

naturalized difference that regulates inclusion and exclusion has to be created. To do this, spatial social research seeks a “small form” through which hegemonic conditions of inclusion can be experienced. Kracauer captures small things both in material form as exemplary artifacts and in immaterial form as narratives that provide an unobstructed and unclouded view of things. Scenes, situations, and artifacts serve here as exemplary objects in which distinction/discrimination in the sense of the power-related production of groups and differences takes place in a particularly impressive way, as “images” of a social practice (cf. Lueger & Froschauer, 2020).

### **Example—Differentiation and retreat spaces**

In the following, the preceding remarks are applied to an educational problem. This is to be seen as a sketch that requires further empirical research and is purely illustrative at this point. The example refers to the materialization of so-called retreat spaces in schools, which are additional spaces provided for differentiated instruction, promotion and retreat.

For example, there is hardly a new school building in Germany that does not have cluster-shaped niches, attachments to classrooms, or retreat spaces (see Figure 8.1). When talking about these rooms, reference is usually made to the didactic practicality of the differentiation and retreat rooms—in short, a heterogeneity of rooms in schools should do justice to the heterogeneity of the pupils. In the image of the school, rooms for differentiation and retreat are included and internalized as a matter of course. The walking paths of the students are just adapted to the nested and multilayered geometry of the rooms. But in the walking paths we find the orders of separation embedded in the spatial practices—from which the tacit idea of a special place shines out.

Heterogeneity and differentiation thus simultaneously form the basis for a flexibilization of the special school as “special places”, with seemingly invisible material indications. In an apparent piece of multifunctional equipment, a use of space is propagated, which is not supposed to be designed and set for



*Figure 8.1* Differentiation and retreat spaces.

specific groups of people. But in the traces of use of the rooms, habituation and segregation are embedded. Under the surface of the cleaned tables, the screen-like sterility of intervention-logical and technology-based promotion is hinted at. In the locked cabinet is the evidence-based promotion material. The furniture bears witness to impersonal furnishings—interchangeable chairs, tucked-away materials, a neglected sofa. In reachable proximity, the room seems like the extended arm of the classroom, providing the breeding ground for a social use of separation. This impression is supported by the use of paraprofessionals, who are entrusted in a deprofessionalized way with the individual support of individual pupils—and with the task not to disturb the simultaneous processes in the classroom. In this way, the paradoxical similarity of individualized support and perpetuated separation is spatially brought forth.

In order to be able to perpetuate the achievement-based standardizations in the classroom, a refuge of expectationlessness is created that is adapted to the size of a class group or individual. Whether limited as an independent space or delimited as a transit niche, a geometric and designed refuge is set up—which offers an additive fallback option for additive students. In a neoliberal world of the standardized and the flexible, these spaces offer a fitting possibility of delegation. At the same time, this flexibilization and fluidization can mean the cementing of structures of withholding and segregation. Thus, spaces of differentiation and retreat become celebrated ornaments of inclusion—as they are perverted ornaments of exclusion at the same time.

It suggests, then, that differentiation and retreat spaces are physical-spatial spaces of support and their practice a spatialized segregation, rather than inclusion, that is, a “repetition of exclusion” in inclusive schools, as Florian and Beaton (2018) named it. Just as special schools can be understood as an aesthetic reflex of the rationality of the prevailing achievement-based society, spaces of differentiation and retreat, and dimensions of their practice, are a covert form of this: Mini-segregations that symbolize, in a covert and thereby even more perfidious form, the mechanisms of a hierarchical and utilitarian pecking order. Thus, the spaces do not reveal a self-determined differentiation and agency, an appropriation of (sub)cultural niches in schools by students, but rather an expansion of the intervention-related control zone of (para)professionals.

This perspective is also supported by research that focuses on empirically reconstructing the perspectives of marginalized actors on, for example, migration or disability (see, among others, Buchner, 2021; Diz-Munoz et al., 2022; Köpfer, 2022). The findings show that the surface structure of person-centered support and facilitation simultaneously contains a powerful materialized mechanism of delegation and separation beneath (see also Pfahl, 2011; Bauman, 2005). Since the spatial turn has brought the material level of space more into the research focus and a relational understanding of space is increasingly applied in research (cf. Buchner & Köpfer, 2022), a further development or a “new materialist” turn toward an inclusion/exclusion-related artifact research is still pending. This development could be supported by the trend toward the

increased use of photo-voice and photo-elicitation techniques as a method in (often participatory) research projects (e.g., Dunne et al., 2018).

c. Inclusion conditions as spatiotemporal phenomena

Based on this perspective on the “small forms” that deviates from the classical approach of critical theory around Adorno and Horkheimer, Kracauer designed social research that captures processes of marginalization and segregation along the marginalized, in their things and voices at a particular time in a particular place. Kracauer's sociological perspective on space can therefore support educational discourse on inclusion and exclusion to accompany transformational processes by thinking of the relations of inclusion and exclusion as spatiotemporal phenomena. Inclusion/exclusion studies are thus always transit studies that make visible the social conditions of education and its production for a particular moment. The focus on social conditions supports a perspective on inclusion/exclusion that does not tie the question of participation to the so-being of actors in an essentialist sense, but rather focuses on the production of space and the positioning of actors in it—also with a view to changing positions and transformations in the addressing of actors. The aforementioned conditions are not “existent”—in the sense of frameworks for action—but are tacitly and continuously mediated to persons, by persons, but also by spatial arrangements and artifacts. This can be made relevant to relational spatial research that looks at so-called “conditions of inclusion” (Weisser, 2017) by taking up questions such as: How can conditions of inclusion be revealed in material spaces? How can the research perspective be directed toward spatial conditions and at the same time take into account actors' agency and belonging (Slee, 2019)? How can inscribed symbols and practices of resistance and subversion in educational spaces be read (Pluquailec, 2018)? How can the relationship between spatial conditions of inclusion and affect be captured (Naraian & Khoja-Moolji, 2016)? How can spatiotemporal “transit studies” be further developed as longitudinal developmental studies? Here—that is, beyond Kracauer's work, which attempts to decipher power-related surface structures but remains vague in its definition of the “real”—further fields of development for spatiotemporal inclusion research become apparent.

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## 9 Digital learning

### Navigating inclusive/exclusive spaces through open educational practice

*Michelle Harrison*

#### Introduction

Throughout the ongoing pandemic, we have struggled to provide flexible educational approaches in response to the constantly shifting need for safe spaces and places for learning. The move to remote learning and the increasing adoption of supportive digital technologies has made the need to consider how merging our physical/virtual, online/offline spaces can provide more equitable and inclusive access to education even more urgent. At the same time, our pandemic experiences have increasingly exposed ongoing digital inequities where we see increased burdens on those who may already be struggling with access to education. In both K-12 and higher education settings, technical, structural, and socio-economic barriers to access have increased. At the same time, concerns over the use of and access to student data, the increased use of surveillance technologies, the need for data literacy and the impacts on health and mental-health are growing (Brennan et al., 2021; Herold, 2020; Shin & Hickey, 2021). These burdens and impacts have been felt more keenly by those students who may not have ready access to technologies, who may struggle financially or who have relied on the services and supports only available when visiting a campus in person, such as using computer labs or having a quiet and private space to study. Not only can these learners struggle to access their learning materials and supports, but they are experiencing intrusion on their personal and private spaces, as instructors, in trying to emulate the “normal” practices of the classroom, increasingly rely on technologies such as the Learning Management System, web cameras, and other software to monitor and track learning in remote settings (Beetham et al., 2022).

This shift to remote learning has caused what UNESCO (2020a) described as the “largest disruption of education systems in history” (p. 2). And, as has been discussed by various authors (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020), this shift to remote learning is not equivalent to the more methodical and research-informed planning that often goes into the design of traditional distance and online delivery experiences (Hodges et al., 2020). Studies have described the experiences of this shift, both from faculty and students who report the unease and challenges they experienced as their normal routines and practices were and

continue to be disrupted (VanLeeuwen et al., 2021). “At the same time” a common thread emerged in which students and faculty alike reported an increased sense of accessibility and flexibility facilitated by a move to virtual learning spaces (Rapanta et al., 2021). At the time of writing in Canada, we are seeing a shift back to in-person learning, but only after this winter saw another quick move to remote learning for many institutions in response to a new wave of infections and increased community transmission. We need to expect and anticipate future disruptions, resulting from our continued response to the global pandemic, climate emergencies, and/or conflicts. Flexible approaches are not only needed, but students will increasingly demand them as they see the benefits of the types of educational experiences that can be facilitated by digital technologies and the approaches that have been used for decades in more open, flexible, and distance education institutions (Hodges et al., 2020; Rapanta et al., 2021).

How do we balance the need for flexible approaches and an increased reliance on digital technologies, with the knowledge that while they both open new possibilities for access and inclusion, new closures and exclusions can be introduced? What does “engaging with openness” look like in practice? How do we design spaces that might help us meet the potential of more open and equitable practice? In this chapter, I will use a spatial lens to explore open approaches to education that can provide more permeable access and flexibility for learners, but also critically examine how these approaches introduce tensions as learners negotiate the realities of their experiences of working in the open. Through a case study of open course design, I will examine ways that educators can use open approaches to design, including the blurring of informal/formal spaces, and the uses of OERs and open platforms to create more student-centered, equitable and accessible learning spaces.

### **Inclusion and openness**

As highlighted in a recent UNESCO (2020a, p. 6) report, the pandemic has “shown us the extent to which our societies exploit power imbalances, and our global system exploits inequalities”. This is where we can focus on inclusive educational approaches, which for the purposes of this edited book, can be seen to be a process of “removing barriers and disadvantages in educational systems and organizations” (Georg Rißler, personal communication). This approach and definition is also supported by Ainscow (2020, p. 9), where he promotes systemic and policy approaches to inclusion which focus on the removal of barriers to promote the “presence, participation and achievement” of all students, particularly those who may be at risk of being excluded or marginalized. As defined in the UN report on inclusion and education, inclusive education refers to ways that “equity, diversity, equal opportunity and non-discrimination” can be embedded within our systems, to help overcome the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities due to “gender, remoteness, wealth, disability, ethnicity, language, migration, displacement, incarceration, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, religion, and other beliefs

and attitudes” (UNESCO, 2020b, p. 6). Inclusive education has been built into the Sustainable Development Goals. The nine recommendations from the UN on education in a post-COVID world include the right to education, valuing teachers and their collaboration, student participation in co-creating change and provision of OERs and open access tools to all educators. In this chapter, I will examine the role of open education and OERs as a means to provide more inclusive systemic changes. For many, the value of OERs is that they are free of cost to the user, are adaptable, reusable, and revisable, and provide access to knowledge and content created by trusted sources. Additionally, open access tools provide digital platforms that allow for communication and collaboration in digital spaces where teachers and students can have greater agency and control over their practices, data, and privacy. As we rely more on digital technologies to make connections, we need to carefully consider the implications that this may have on access and what large-scale adoption of technologies, which may include third-party tools and applications, may entail. As the UNESCO report (2020b) emphasizes, the value in using OERs and open tools is that we are not compromising our data and relinquishing privacy controls or curriculum focus to corporate entities who may exploit it for uses that may not be in anyone’s educational interests.

OERs have benefits beyond access, cost, and data, as they can be used as a starting point to rethink how we design our learning spaces. A broad category of teaching and learning practices related to open approaches has emerged under the umbrella term open educational practices (OEPs). OEPs have been broadly defined and include multiple elements of teaching and learning, such as participatory and critical pedagogies, the use of open licensing and open technologies, the development and adoption of open educational resources (OER), and collaboration with and recognition of multiple voices and perspectives (Tietjen & Asino, 2021). One aspect of OEP that is often emphasized is open pedagogy. It is not a new approach, and, as highlighted by Morgan (2016), three early foundations, autonomy and interdependence, freedom and responsibility, and democracy and participation, were shared by Claude Paquette (1979) in his article “Some Foundations of Open Pedagogy.” In more recent work, Hegarty’s (2015) model outlines eight attributes that can be considered in the design of learning experiences, including encouraging learner contributions to OER, using participatory technologies, developing trust, feeling confidence and openness in working with others, creating a connected community and space for innovation and creativity, freely sharing resources and disseminating knowledge, and providing opportunities for reflective practice and peer review and critique. Grounded in sociocultural and critical approaches to learning, OEPs and open pedagogies emphasize meaning-making through shared experience, connection, and guided practice, and how learning can be understood within larger social realities.

Desiring student agency and knowledge co-creation, many educators have recently focused on how OEPs, which often use networked and digital technologies, can create more inclusive and just learning experiences. For example,

Jhangiani and DeRosa (2017, para. 13) argue that open pedagogy can be a “a process of designing architectures and using tools for learning that enable students to shape the public knowledge commons of which they are a part”. Bali et al. (2020), in their analysis of a variety of OEP examples, highlight where open pedagogy as a process, which includes cocreation of content, open and collaborative web annotation, and Wikipedia editing (feminist edit-a-thons), can have a transformative effect on learning, particularly when including students from marginalized populations. This is echoed by Baran and AlZoubi (2020), who found that students developed an awareness of the socio-economic impacts of OERs and their role in equity and access, and developed their own agency in curating and developing knowledge. Agency was also highlighted as a benefit of OEPs by Axe et al. (2020) who highlighted that students felt that developing renewable assignments helped amplify their own voices and contributed to a feeling of inclusion. In my own work, we have developed a “Rethink Learning Design” project, which aims to build on the affordances of open technologies to be more inclusive of students’ voices and to center non-dominant perspectives and voices.

However, many of these open approaches assume a level of stable infrastructure and digital literacy that many areas of the world may not support. Using a social justice framework, Hodgkinson-Williams and Trotter (2018, p. 206) critically examined how OEPs may be used to create “participatory parity” to “counter economic inequalities, cultural inequities and political exclusions in education”. They found that although there are benefits to OEPs, there are also many barriers to learners benefiting from OERs in the global South, including a lack of digital infrastructure (and the continued need for print materials), the dominance of OERs from a Western perspective (often available only in English), and a focus on curricula and knowledge that is *deemed* valuable, again often from a Western perspective. Similarly, Funk and Guthadjaka (2020) argue for the value in open tools to provide access to and sharing of Indigenous knowledge, but also caution that many of these technologies have embedded Western epistemologies which may not reflect indigenous ways of knowing or knowledge-sharing practices. Bali et al. (2020, p. 10) emphasize that OEP can have “negative effects where economic maldistribution exists” and encourages those who create OEP opportunities to make their materials accessible and translatable and to include the participation of marginalized groups in their work. While these authors argue for the benefits of OEP, they caution that if we want to use OEP to rethink our pedagogical practices, we need to take a critical perspective and to consider, as Edwards (2015, p. 253) asks, “what forms of openness are worthwhile and for whom?”

As we consider the inequities that have increasingly been exposed during the pandemic and with the move to Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT), open practices can have a role in providing access and resources, including more equitable representation in the curriculum and materials, and the development of open access tools and learning technologies that provide educators and students with control over their digital learning spaces. As Rapanta et al.

(2021, p. 724) point out, “student demand for more flexible forms of educational provision will mean a continuing, and expanding, role for digital technologies and the approaches pioneered in open, flexible and distance education”. But how do we ensure these shifts do not enshrine or embrace the types of practices that exacerbate the increasing divides that have surfaced? One way may be to examine how openness is designed for and experienced—by faculty and students—through an analysis of everyday practices. As educators, we need to consider how the structures of these spaces will influence the open teaching practices we are using, both in how they may make our spaces more permeable, and in how they might make them more impenetrable. We also need to critically examine the idealized version of what Oliver (2015) termed “technologically mediated openness”—that is, often associated with online, networked learning space to consider what kinds of exclusions and closedness can also be introduced.

### **Considering open spaces**

For many, our educational spaces have both expanded and compressed during the pandemic. In a sense we have been tied more than ever to a very small selection of *places*, but our work and study spaces, have expanded to include what in the past might have been for many, our private spaces, including kitchens, bedrooms, and, in the case of a colleague, a closet. And, as our spaces for learning, work, and socialization became compressed, more than ever they have been mediated by technologies that many were not initially familiar with. As Boys (2021) and others highlight, many teachers keenly felt the loss of face-to-face connections, and, unfamiliar with how to occupy virtual spaces, found these spaces to be discomfiting and alien. As was highlighted earlier, many students also struggled with creating spaces for study, and those who may not have had dedicated study spaces or access to Wi-Fi, who had to compete for bandwidth, or who also needed to provide childcare were further disadvantaged by the loss of the physical/digital/social/support spaces of the institution. The everyday practices and ordinary routines of Higher Education (HE) have been disrupted, providing opportunities for us to reconsider how this blurring of boundaries, already in progress in many areas, may be considered moving forward.

Boys (2021) challenges us to consider how many practices in HE are already “differentially distributed” and “how underlying discriminatory patterns are currently being ignored, challenged or reframed” (p. 28). As was highlighted earlier, during the pandemic students and faculty embraced the flexibility that traditional open and distance education approaches provide. However, flexibility in and of itself has also been critiqued, and, as Houlden and Veletsianos (2019) argue, flexibility can be reduced to an “anytime/anyplace” discourse, which, taken at surface value, assumes a learner has access to the “capital, time and space” for learning in spite of other personal responsibilities and obligations. This idealized learner will have the capacity to sustain

the needed efforts to engage with their studies, and ignores factors such as ability and digital literacies, access to technology, financial resources, and, during the pandemic, the space and time for study. And, though freed from the structural limitations imposed by the requirements of F2F study (schedules, commuting), other barriers are often encountered. Haydock (2022), in his study on how open learning courses support students with exceptionalities, found that flexible learning environments supported students through additional time and personalized pacing, but they also struggled with lack of structure, lack of faculty support (and awareness of accessibility/accommodation requirements), and lack of visibility within the institutional support structures. Houlden and Veletsianos (2019) also emphasize that flexibility implies a particular orientation in space and time, and that the access and freedom to study are also shaped by structural forms of power which govern our institutions and personal lives. Earlier examples of OEPs also echo these same critiques and concerns and challenge us to think about how openness can be interpreted and included in our designs to be as inclusive as possible. As Ainscow (2020) highlights, to promote inclusion and equity, we need to focus not on a particular technology, technique, or organizational structure, but on how learners can engage in social learning processes that work for their context. In our enthusiastic embrace of OEPs, are we considering only our idealized student who can take advantage of open tools, has the space and time to engage with networks and collaborative tasks, and who has the digital literacy to engage more widely and safely within a networked open commons? As many authors have argued, we need to consider who is and who isn't able to take advantage of the open approaches in programs and courses. Who benefits from openness, and in what ways?

These kinds of questions are inherently spatial, as we consider how space/time are experienced by learners in each of their unique contexts. In her exploration of the inequalities surfaced in the everyday routines of HE during the pandemic, Boys (2021) reminds us that

teaching and learning—across its conceptual, personal, social, material and virtual spaces—is (re)produced through inherently entangled spaces, humans, encounters, objects and technologies and needs to be analyzed not through isolated elements (even where these are then “added” together) but as partial, complex and dynamic practices.

(para. 2)

As we consider open educational practices and the kinds of closures or barriers we might be inadvertently introducing, it is useful to analyze the *designs* of these spaces, how both faculty and learners occupy them, and how they are influenced by technologies and other objects. As I have found in previous studies (Harrison, 2016, 2019), the hierarchically defined spaces created when we use digital tools, even those created by social technologies that we may consider inherently more open and participatory, are permeable and accessible

only in certain ways and to certain types of practices. These tools and technologies all have underlying structures, with their own sets of rules, ownership, and hierarchical ordering which shapes how learners and teachers can interact with them, each other, and the larger community. To consider these types of questions, a spatial lens, which allows the researcher to examine both social and material components, becomes a useful tool for examining the complexity that Boys (2021) emphasizes.

### Open practices: A spatial analysis

*Openness is neither neutral nor natural: it creates and depends on closures*  
 – *The Manifesto for Teaching Online*<sup>1</sup>

In previous work (outlined in Harrison, 2018), I proposed a two-tiered conceptual framework (see Figure 9.1) to examine the everyday practices within learning environments in an attempt to analyze how learners and instructors negotiate and enact their spaces. Based on Lefebvre’s (1991) three interwoven conceptions of space, Boys (2011) created a simplified framework that links our daily routines of learning (our normal socio-spatial practices) with our designed learning spaces (representations of space). These representations of space are the maps, plans and models, or the designs used

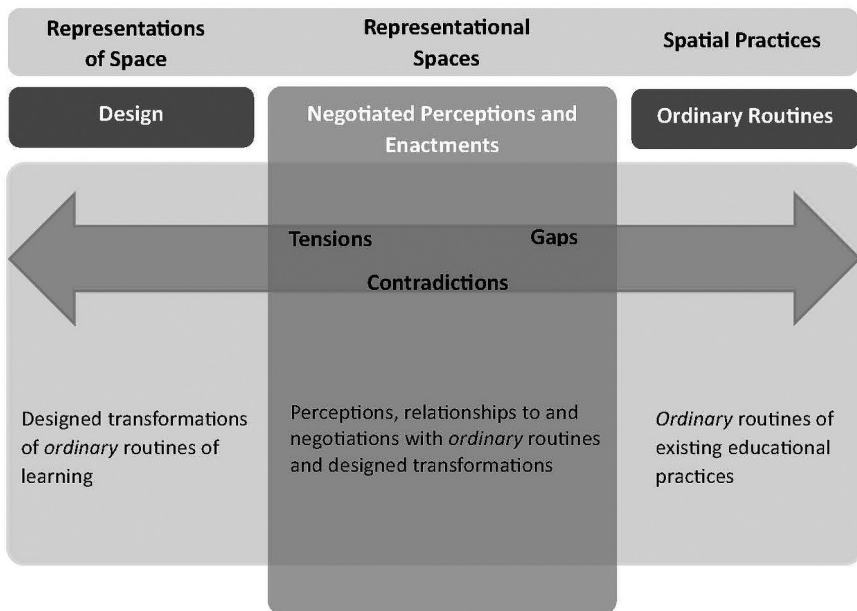


Figure 9.1 Based on Boys’s (2011) framework of learning encounters, adapted for a spatial analysis of learning spaces.

to shape our learning environments to go beyond the daily routines. These designs often include our own biases and assumptions, and as was discussed earlier, in many cases during the pandemic, they were fraught by a lack of expertise with virtual/digital spaces or a lack of awareness of student needs and realities. It is the third space, termed representational space, where participants inscribe their own meanings and adapt both the normal routines and the designed experiences of these existing spaces to meet their own requirements. Boys (2011, p. 56) describes this space as the “participants’ perceptions of, relationship to and negotiations with both the “ordinary” routine of learning and specific designed transformations”. Sheehy (2009) describes this as third space, where learners inscribe their own lived experience onto both the perceived and conceived spaces. This is the space of transformation but also where we can encounter tensions, gaps, and unintended consequences.

Boys (2011) argues that the routines of learning can be seen at three intersecting levels: direct learning encounters, institutional elements, and society-wide conceptions of education. As I have discussed previously in this chapter, OEP can have an impact on learning at all three levels; however, for this discussion, we will focus primarily on the learning encounter. In the next section, I will use the conceptual model outlined in Figure 9.1 to discuss a spatial analysis of an open design of a series of online graduate courses. Using data from an ongoing study, I will examine how learners and instructors negotiate and enact their open spaces (representational) by exploring the inherent gaps and contradictory tensions that arise between design space (representations of space), and the ordinary routines of learning (spatial practices).

### **A case study: Designing for open**

For this section, I call on project data that were collected from a series of courses in a graduate program which embraced many of the attributes highlighted in Hegarty’s open pedagogy model, including the exclusive use of OERs (no resource costs), open and participatory technologies, encouragement of learner generated content and sharing, reflective practice, development of trust, and a focus on learner agency. Using a virtual ethnographic approach, data were collected through interviews, student communication, and mapping of the connected digital spaces that helped frame the learning environment. For the purposes of this chapter, when discussing the role that OEPs can have on creating more inclusive spaces for learning, I will focus the spatial analysis on two aspects of the design—the role of open technologies and a focus on student connection/agency/boundaries. For each aspect, I will first outline the design (representations of space) and existing/ordinary routines of learning (spatial practices), and then introduce the negotiated perceptions and emergent practices that were encountered by participants.



## Open and participatory technologies

### *Design and ordinary practices*

Learning in digital spaces often takes place in highly structured learning management systems (LMSs) or virtual learning environments (VLEs) that are designed to manage, in one space, all of the materials and resources learners need to participate in a course. These spaces are characterized by security, passwords, stability, and predefined levels of access and authorship and reflect the hierarchical and historical divisions and power structures of the university. Provided by both corporate offerings (Blackboard, D2L) and open-source options (Moodle), there has been increasing concern over the role that these systems play in gathering and storing student data, and providing means of multiple forms of surveillance, particularly with the rapid uptick in use during the pandemic (Beetham et al., 2022; Collier & Ross, 2020). Characterized as being inflexible, “walled-in”, and, by one instructor in this study, “buttoned-down,” they can be contrasted with the open and participatory technologies that are considered more distributed, collaborative, networked, and user-defined (Hemmi et al., 2009). Open platforms and tools can be crucial to sharing and collaboration outside the course, allow for student ownership and open licensing, and also prevent forms of surveillance that are encountered when working in closed systems such as an LMS. In this case, a Commons-in-a-box platform, which is open source, supports social networking and collaboration, and allows for greater learner and instructor agency, was used as part of the open design. As part of this design, students are provided with linked blog spaces (termed their ePortfolio and linked to all courses in the program) and encouraged to connect to outside networks through social media platforms and with each other inside the space through a centralized discussion space and a home page with updates and newsfeeds.

### *Negotiated spaces*

Even with more open and participatory architectures, the kinds of learner agency and communication we hope and design for can still be limited. One of the concerns that has been raised with learners working more openly is that they may not feel comfortable sharing work in progress or ideas where they could be open to scrutiny and, perhaps more troubling, be exposed to negative responses or hostile behaviors by online trolls. Consequently, as some research suggests (Roberts, 2022; Werth & Williams, 2021), learner autonomy and choice, as well as digital literacy (including managing privacy and data) should be incorporated, for both students and instructors who may need to provide supports and modeling. In this case, though able to personalize their blog space through theming and adjust their privacy settings (from fully open to fully private), many learners did not take advantage of this functionality. Learners for the most part stuck to the main spaces of the course rather than

connecting outward, and they primarily interacted with resources provided, restricting their participation to the forums and to activities related to required tasks for assessment. Though students reported that they appreciated the increased ownership of their work and the ability to always have it available, and that they acknowledged having an increased awareness of the benefits of OER and open licensing, they also found that moving outside the relative comfort and safety of a more traditional LMS was daunting. They also found that navigating the open course space was at times challenging, as there were multiple places and space to interact and find content and resources. It took them time to figure out the platform and navigating the engagement and expectations of working in an open space required a higher level of self-direction than in more traditional courses they had experienced, with more effort required to connect to resources and to each other. As we implement open practices, we need to be mindful of our learners and their time. Our idealized view of learners as being self-motivated and digitally savvy, who understand privacy, and have the spaces/time to commit to study, is perhaps at odds with the expectations and realities that learners are experiencing.

From a structural perspective, this online environment still echoes hierarchies of the academy, as content is delivered and designed for the most part by the instructor and designer. The ability to shift and change activities is still minimized when pages/links/resources are linked within a rigid hierarchical scheme, and learners do not have open permission to add their own voices, except in very specific spaces (blogs/discussion forums). Online communication is shaped by the hierarchical organization imposed by the structures of online communication tools such as forums or synchronous chat spaces (Herring, 2006) and in both the discussion forums and student blogs, there was evidence of decayed topics, lack of response to queries, and at times little or no response to posts. If we hope to engage learners as co-creators where they may challenge the structures/dominant discourses provided, these spaces may still not align with these practices.

## **Connections/agency/boundaries**

### *Design and ordinary practices*

Jhangiani and DeRosa (2017, para. 8) describe open pedagogy as a guiding praxis that focuses on “collaboration, connection, diversity, democracy, and critical assessments of educational tools and structures”. With a focus on knowledge as being “co-constructed, contextualized, cumulative, iterative, and recursive” (Jhangiani & DeRosa, 2017, para. 12), the value in using an OEP can be in the ways that students can be empowered to become co-creators and to help shape and interact with their communities. In the graduate courses explored in this study, students were all learning at a distance and were encouraged to engage and build their own curriculum, work collaboratively, share resources and ideas, and engage in reflective practice. There was a focus

on agency (through some user control of tools, curation of resources, ownership), digital literacy development (through examination of open licensing and OER) and encouragement to meaningfully connect to their own communities (be it professional or other). They were also encouraged to bring in their own identities, places, and spaces through invitations to share their personal and professional contexts via text, audio, and video contributions.

### *Negotiated spaces*

The learners in the study reported multiple benefits to the OEP design intentions, including an increased awareness of CC licensing and OER availability, the ability to reuse resources and content across courses and in their own practice (using an open platform), and through becoming aware of what it meant to be a “good digital citizen”. They also valued that the principle of connectedness was evident throughout the design, which helped them to think about how to use technologies to help build networks outside the course. As these courses were taking place during early COVID restrictions and lockdowns, they were able to use the ideas/open tools exemplars from the courses to help create connections between groups/communities outside the course to help maintain professional links and to share resources. Finally, they valued the opportunities to work collaboratively to build interdisciplinary resources and to engage in peer review of each other’s work. One of the tensions they encountered was in navigating the balance between the benefits of sharing and the perceived (and often real) risks of sharing their work more openly. Questions such as “Is my work good enough?” and “How do I determine my comfort with quality?” surfaced. They also wondered about the kinds of boundaries that are needed, and how they felt about where the line might be for themselves. What might be the risk of opening yourself up to criticism? Was there a risk (professionally or other) in openly sharing ideas? As Cronin (2018, p. 291) highlights, “Openness is not a one-time decision and it is not universally experienced; it is always complex, personal, contextual, and continually negotiated”. This points to a need to create a supported journey to openness for learners, providing choices around how and when to share, and guidance and resources about privacy, risk, and the increasing role that technologies play in surveillance and digital monitoring. There is also a need to provide learners with ongoing supports as they prepare to share their work openly. This is also emphasized by Al Abri and Dabbagh (2019), who recommended that students receive supports about licensing and ongoing feedback to help improve the quality of their work and their confidence in sharing.

What is notable is the fluidity by which the participants occupy and blend their spaces: work/home, activity/reflection, informal (networks)/formal learning (courses). As outlined in other studies, the boundaries between the online and offline worlds are becoming less distinct, as we constantly shift our perceptions of a space to suit our needs. As Oliver (2015, p. 381) highlights, “the lived experiences of learners and teachers is complex, with devices,

resources and services constantly crossing over from University to personal life and back again”. As discussed in the previous paragraph, learners took advantage of what they were discovering about open platforms and were using them to create connections with their own informal learning networks. Though they might not have been as active in the spaces provided within the course learning environment, we see new practices emerging as learners use these tools/patterns to create bridges/connections outside the formal learning provisions. We also see them willing to take risks in working outside their comfort zones, and in creating and sharing resources with their communities and peers.

Participants also highlighted the value of having access and ownership of their spaces, and, though there was not a lot of evidence of personalization, they did share personal anecdotes, images, and video of their own contexts. In her discussion of the uses of mobile technologies for adult work-learning spaces, Thompson (2014, p. 543) proposes that though technologies promote spatial reordering, they do not necessarily create “placeless places” as paradoxically, a reassertion of place and location often occurs. Particularly as the pandemic has impacted the places where we work/learn/study, our spaces are becoming less defined by dichotomized categories, such as here/there, near/far, personal/private, or presence/absence. Traditional boundaries for learning are being reassembled into new configurations, and the blurring of formal/informal, online/offline, will continue.

### **Discussion: Shifting boundaries**

The spatial analysis highlights that there is a constant shifting and renegotiating within the learning spaces we are trying to create, both as designers and as learners. In this case, tensions related to the complexity and hierarchies of the learning environment, student expectations/time (presence/absence, time), resources, visibility/privacy, and quality all had an impact on how the learning spaces were perceived or enacted. In this push to create what we perceive to be more permeable boundaries, we also need to consider what new exclusions may be introduced, and at what cost. Bayne, Knox, and Ross (2015, p. 248) argue that many approaches to openness in education have been based on assumptions that all learners are highly motivated and self-directed, and that the only barriers to uptake are provided by “institutional structures, financial constraints and geographic distance”. These assumptions fail to recognize the different expectations, skills, and values that learners bring, and, as highlighted in this case, though learners valued the autonomy, connections, and agency of the design, the complexity of working and learning using open technologies and being in the open did present challenges. In other work (Harrison, 2016) where I examined open boundaries that occur on the peripheries of the traditional provisions of the institution, I described the remixing and repurposing practices of the instructors and learners as *wrangling* their spaces. Wrangling means both “contending or struggling” and “managing or herding” for control, and we often find that our open technologies both align and conflict with

the arrangements for learning. Though these courses had some characteristics of a formal, closed learning space (with hierarchies, lack of flexibility), the designed elements of openness also provided opportunities for the creation of a hybrid or troublesome space where participants crossed and blurred boundaries between their professional and learning communities, and between work, home, and digital spaces, and had opportunities to co-create and curate knowledge with their peers.

## **Conclusion**

As this pandemic continues to disrupt our educational systems as of this writing, there is a need to consider the ways that our technology-mediated learning spaces have both opened new opportunities and closed off access to others, and in what ways. From an inclusive learning perspective, open educational practices, including the use of OERs, open platforms, and open pedagogical approaches offer ways to allow for greater learner autonomy and agency, control of curriculum, and more equitable access to resources and knowledge. However they also introduce possible exclusions, as digital OERs might not be accessible, may perpetuate Western epistemologies, and may not reflect local communities and ways of knowing. Lambert (2018) argues that to avoid what she terms “open determinism”, a social justice-oriented approach can help us attune to the “demographics of privilege”, to provide resources and recognition to those who may be underrepresented or marginalized. We also need to consider the social, economic, and technological realities of our learners, setting expectations that reflect their differing space/time needs, particularly for those students who may be disadvantaged.

As discussed earlier, the question of who benefits from openness, and in what ways, is inherently spatial, as we need to consider how time/space are experienced by learners in different contexts. To illustrate this, I used a spatial framework (see Figure 9.1) to explore an example from a postsecondary open course to examine what engaging with openness can look like in practice. By contrasting the design intentions (representations of space) and existing/ordinary routines of learning (spatial practices) with the negotiated perceptions and emergent practices that were encountered by participants, we can reveal ways that openness can both be inclusive and exclusive in practice.

From an inclusive design perspective, the open technologies provided a means for learners to connect more seamlessly between their formal/informal learning environments and to develop skills and practices to examine their own digital identities and literacies. There was also choice and agency, as learners were encouraged to create and contribute to developing curriculum, collaborating with peers and connecting to their communities. At the same time, tensions were experienced as students were challenged to navigate both the complexity of the learning spaces and their own comfort levels with privacy and visibility and how to create those crucial connections with others. The hierarchically defined spaces created through digital tools, even those created

by social technologies that many consider inherently more open and participatory, are permeable and accessible only in certain ways, and to certain types of practices. These underlying structures, with their own set of rules, ownership, and hierarchical ordering, does impact the resulting spaces, dictating how learners and teachers can shape and interact with them, and may be at odds with our open design intentions. As illustrated in this case, exclusions to participation were introduced, as learners negotiated their comfort with openness and concerns about privacy, digital and technological literacy, and challenges to making connections due to time/spatial constraints. If we as educators are hoping to build more inclusive and equitable spaces, to build on the democratizing ideals of OEPs, then we need to attend carefully to how they can also create exclusions, through barriers to access, resources, or representation.

## Note

1 <https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/manifesto-teaching-online>

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# 10 Inclusion and exclusion in classroom practices

Empirical analyses of conjunctive spaces of experience in secondary schools

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## Introduction

Since the beginning of this century, social science-oriented school and classroom research has been shaped by two significant approaches: on the one hand, by the “performative turn” originally proclaimed by cultural studies (Fischer-Lichte, 2000), which is rooted in Anglo-American “performance studies” (Turner, 1969); and, on the other hand, by the “inclusive turn” (Ainscow, 2007), which has gained attention in educational science through the discourse on the implementation of the UN-CRPD (Budde et al., 2019).

Both approaches influence the selection of subject matter for research on schools and teaching. Mel Ainscow uses the term “inclusive turn”, which he developed, as follows:

In general terms it involves moves away from explanations of educational failure that concentrate on the characteristics of individual children and their families towards an analysis of the barriers to participation and learning experienced by pupils within school systems.

(Ainscow, 2007, p. 3)

Such barriers addressed by Ainscow are to be seen as phenomena that are produced both in curricula (Erevelles, 2005) as well as in interactions and social practices in schools and classrooms themselves (Wagner-Willi & Sturm, 2012). Those barriers have a social and a spatial reference and represent forms of exclusion.

The other approach, the turn toward performativity, is associated with the conviction in qualitative educational research that empirical findings can essentially be obtained through the reconstruction of (pedagogical) practice. Similar to the inclusive turn, this research approach assumes that practice is always embedded in social situations and is primarily interactive. The focus is on the performative production, i.e., on the processual, bodily-linguistic-spatial acting and interacting (Wulf et al., 2001).

Despite a common social science background, however, the potentials of both research approaches, i.e., the “inclusive turn” on the one hand and the social space-focused branch of the performativity discourse on the other, have been related to each other in only a few works (e.g., Köpfer, 2016). In this chapter, we will refer to discourses around performativity, which consider space and spatiality, but also the establishment of boundaries, transitions, and territories, as central aspects of social processes and relationships. Further, we will present the metatheoretical categories of the Praxeological Sociology of Knowledge (PSK)—first and foremost, the conjunctive *space* of experience (Mannheim, 1982)—as a perspective on spatial qualitative research on inclusion. Additionally, we refer to the connection between power, visualization, and degradation related to space in classroom practices. This is followed by a short description of the methodology we use: an empirical approach to the spatiality and performativity of classroom practice with the help of videographies analyzed using the Documentary Method (Bohnsack, 2020, Bohnsack 2012). In order to account for the inherent logic of the conjunctive space of experience on which the classroom practice is based, data from secondary schools in Switzerland and Canada are examined in a comparative analysis. At the same time, the (transnational) comparison allows interesting insights into both similarities and differences regarding the (experiential) spatial constitution of classroom practice. A Conclusion summarizes the main results and discusses the meaning of the proposed praxeological-sociological view of social spaces for the approach of reconstructive inclusion research.

### **Social science conceptions of space and spatiality**

Wanting to extend ethnographic observations in the classroom “by the differentiated analysis of spatial conditions and effects of the teaching situation” (Breidenstein, 2004, p. 87), Georg Breidenstein takes up the spatial sociological concept of Martina Löw (2001). Distinguishing herself from conceptions that consider space as a reality separate from action (Löw, 2001, p. 64), Löw argues for an action-theoretical conception and emphasizes “that the constitution of space itself must be conceived as a social process” (Löw, 2001, p. 67). In doing so, she understands “action itself as space-forming” (Löw, 2001, p. 67) and develops a concept of social space as a “relational order of social goods and people” (Löw, 2001, p. 158). Space is created by social goods and people and their relational placements or arrangements. Löw distinguishes two processes linked in practical action:

- On the one hand, the linking of social goods and living beings to spaces via processes of imagination, perception, and memory, referred to as synthesis performance,
- On the other hand, the placing of social goods and living beings, referred to as spacing.

Here, Löw offers the possibility for the development of an action-theoretical understanding of space. However, as Breidenstein (2004, p. 91) rightly points out, she did not “explicate her conception in a micro-sociological or interactionist way”.

Such elaboration of social space can be found in the classic, micro-sociological interaction analyses of Erving Goffman (1983, p. 28) as he presented them with the analytical observation category of “territoriality”. Territories can be spatially extended and location-bound (Goffman, 1983, p. 29), such as in the classroom, but can also be nonspatial, i.e. the “information reserve” (Goffman, 1983, p. 38). With the concept of territory, Goffman associates a claim that can be asserted and challenged in interactions. However, the problem here is that his conception starts from the individual. His focus on the production of and dealing with territories and their boundaries is, nonetheless, particularly suitable for the reconstruction of space and spatiality in classroom interactions.

For the spatial analysis of inclusion and exclusion in teaching practices, we refer to work on the micro-sociological consideration of territoriality (Goffman, 1983), focusing on those categories that are performatively tied back into space and spatiality. Empirically, we refer to the categories of *personal space* and *possessional territory*. For Erving Goffman (1983), the category of personal space refers to the space immediately surrounding the individual, the trespassing of which is interpreted as encroachment. The category of possessional territory describes objects that can be identified with the self and surround the body (Goffman, 1983, p. 38); for example, personal belongings, like a notebook or backpack.

In this chapter, we propose to connect the micro-sociological approach of Goffman with the theoretical categories of the PSK (Bohnsack, 2018), especially with the concept of the “conjunctive space of experience” developed by Karl Mannheim (1982, p. 191). According to Mannheim, individuals derive the meaning of experience from a “certain context of experience supported by a community”. This “space of experience” arises in common experience and action; it is a “conjunctive” dynamic nexus that connects the participants (Mannheim, 1982, p. 194). In addition, experiential knowledge is formed in it, a “conjunctive recognition” that is not readily communicable to third parties (Mannheim, 1982, p. 191). Mannheim (1952, p. 73) emphasizes the “rootedness of thinking in social space”. The space of experience is thus to be understood as a social space that is formed in practice and interacts with experiential knowledge, in the sense of collective orientation frameworks that structure action.

Significant for Mannheim’s conception is the distinction between the “conjunctive”, i.e., pre-reflexive implicit level of knowledge (Mannheim, 1982, p. 191) on the one hand and a “communicative”, i.e., reflexive explicit level of knowledge (Mannheim, 1982, p. 255) on the other. This relates to the distinction between conjunctive practice and the communicative program of

inclusive teaching. The latter is documented in pedagogical concepts, whereas the practice and implicit knowledge associated with it can be reconstructed through the observation of bodily-spatial actions. From this analytical perspective, social processes of producing and processing space, territories, and territorial boundaries refer to:

- Implicit affiliations and orientation frameworks (or frame congruencies) that structure action (Bohnsack, 2017, p. 123).
- Implicit differences/borders vis-à-vis other conjunctive spaces of experience and thus also differences/borders vis-à-vis other orientations, i.e., frame incongruencies (Bohnsack, 2017).

Accordingly, we can analyze processes of inclusion and exclusion in relation to the production and demarcation of common, interconnecting spaces of experience and associated orientation frameworks. Regarding processes of inclusion and exclusion, we distinguish between explicit and implicit norms within practice. These norms in turn are to be differentiated from the ones in educational discourse.

With regard to an analysis of space-related practices in classroom interactions in the context of inclusion and exclusion, another concern of this chapter is to contribute to the “development of a research and theoretical perspective” that asks about “pedagogical spatial relations with regard to the practices of power and subjectivation interwoven in them” (Nugel, 2016, p. 9). In this context, we understand “practices of subjectivation” as identity constructions in social interactions in the sense of Goffman (1961a, 1963) and PSK (Bohnsack, 2017). “Power-structured interactions” (Bohnsack, 2017, p. 272) go hand in hand with degradations or gradations inside the classroom, i.e., with a visualization—also bodily-spatial—of hierarchy, especially of the position of those lower-placed pupils who are affected by a construction of “total identity” (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 205; see also Bohnsack, 2017, p. 246). Taking up Garfinkel’s concept, Bohnsack speaks of a “second coding” (Bohnsack, 2017, p. 137) in the field of identity construction, which is added to “first coding”, i.e., the “constitutive (external) framing” (Bohnsack, 2017, p. 136) of action in organizations, e.g., in teaching practices through disciplining and assessment (Bohnsack, 2017). With the construction of a total identity, “the external framing is in fact transferred to the construction of the (total) person” (Bohnsack, 2017, p. 136). This is accompanied by a degradation through the process of a “moral indignation” (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 206) as well as “the restriction of personal autonomy of action through targeted control” (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 137). In addition to making the hierarchical position visible, “strategies of invisibilisation” (Garfinkel, 1967) are added in power-structured interactions, i.e., the elimination of the possibility of metacommunication or role distance (see also Wagener, 2020). Significant for the approach of praxeological inclusion research presented here is that a conjunctive space of experience

is constitutive for the establishment of power-structured interactions in (school and other) organizations. Here, Goffman's sociological view of territoriality is taken as a micro-analytical observational perspective on the performativity of social space and spatiality.

### **Space-time dimensions of social practice: Documentary video interpretation**

The action-theoretical view on space that is introduced by Löw in the context of the spatial turn opens up a connection to the performative turn. This connection allows for a focus on multidimensional social practice, which we take up methodologically. With the performative turn, the qualitative methods of school and classroom research have been expanded and differentiated by turning to visual procedures such as videography (Bohnsack, 2020; Fritzsche & Wagner-Willi, 2015). The associated turn to the bodily-spatial content of interactive practice in the classroom also means that the analysis has to deal with that level of the performative which we can grasp with the concept of the structure of simultaneity (Bohnsack, 2020, 2019; Wagner-Willi, 2004). Videography allows recorded interactive events to be reproduced and viewed repeatedly. Photograms, i.e., video stills, can be extracted for closer analysis. This allows a micro-analysis on the bodily-spatial level of the interactions (Erickson, 1992). The method of documentary interpretation of classroom videography (Fritzsche & Wagner-Willi, 2015; Wagener, 2020) is directed toward reconstructing conjunctive spaces of experience with regard to school and teaching. This method (Bohnsack, 2020) is oriented toward the reconstruction of process structures of practice and enables an exploration of the spatial dimension of teaching practices and interactions.

In this documentary video interpretation, we combine the reconstruction of simultaneity as documented in photograms (stills) with the analysis of the sequentiality of the selected video sequences. The interpretation of both the photograms and the video sequences follows the distinction between the "what" on the level of formulating interpretation, i.e., the content, and the "how" on the level of reflective interpretation (Bohnsack, 2020), i.e., the way in which the actors act and interact. The photogram interpretation works with the analytical steps developed by Bohnsack (2020), such as the analysis of perspective or scenic choreography. A summarizing interpretation merges the main results of the interpretation of the photograms and the video sequence.

### **Inclusion and exclusion: Comparing conjunctive spaces of experience in Swiss and Canadian secondary schools**

In the following, we present a comparative analysis of the relation of space and the practical construction of (achievement-related) differences in two educational contexts, Switzerland and Canada, which differ widely in school structures and historical experiences regarding inclusive education policies and practice.

*Primary framing through pathologisation, moralization or subject matter reference: Art and mathematics lessons in Swiss “inclusive” secondary schools*

The video data and interpretation are based on a doctoral thesis investigating the construction of assessment-related differences in classrooms (Wagener, 2020) and was collected in four schools located in an urban area in the German-speaking part of Switzerland: two secondary schools that integrated two tracks defined by pupils’ achievement. Both of these tracks lead to vocational training. There are also pupils diagnosed with special educational needs (SEN) in those schools. Moreover, two grammar schools (Gymnasien) were included in the sample. These exclusively represent the highest and academic-oriented school track of the multi-track school system. In each school, mathematics, German language, and art lessons of one class of eighth grade were video-recorded with two cameras. The following video analysis encompasses the simultaneous and the sequential dimension of a video sequence derived from an art lesson at a secondary school. The pupils work on an assignment given by the art teacher, Mr. Krause. They are to construct a square on a sheet of paper as a frame for drawing a hexagon representing a pencil lead. Proportional to the pencil lead, they are to draw a pencil. All names are anonymised.

*Simultaneous dimension*

The selected photogram shows the bodily-spatial positioning of the actors depicted, which is typical for this sequence: *Mr. Krause* stands next to *Pablo*, who constructs a hexagon with a compass, while *Mrs. Seematter*, the SEN teacher, sits beside *Linda* and draws in front of the pupil. At the same time, the other pupils show very different positions. While some pupils appear to be working on the assignment, others face each other. On the other hand, *Gordana* and *Edonita* turn to *Mr. Krause* with different bodily-spatial positions.

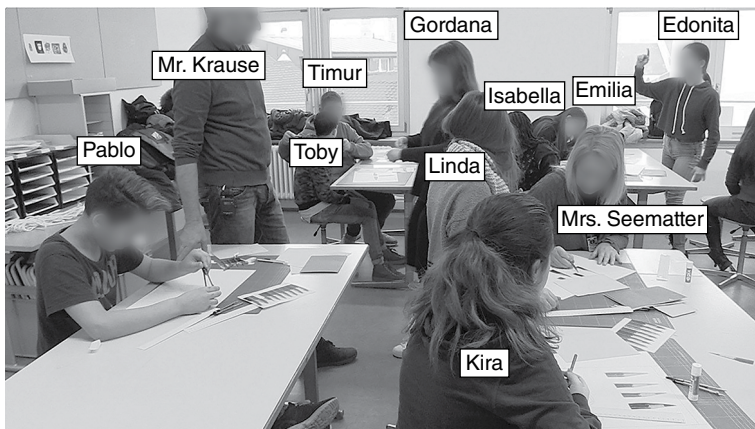


Figure 10.1 Photogram.

With his right hand, the teacher lightly touches the work table, i.e., *Pablo's* personal territory (Goffman, 1983). *Mr. Krause's* immediate proximity to *Pablo* shows a relatedness of the teacher to the pupil's action and suggests a control of his activity, whereby he is not looking at *Pablo* or his drawing, but at *Gordana*, who is walking toward him, holding something in her hands that she seems to be looking at. The teacher's shift of weight toward *Pablo* and his occupation of the table imply a longer control situation that extends temporally beyond *Gordana's* address, while his standing and the discreetly touching the table imply only a temporary positioning.

The bodily-spatial positioning of *Mrs. Seematter*, the SEN teacher, contrasts with that of the teacher. Comparable to the art teacher, she is positioned at the edge of the table next to the pupil *Linda*. However, she is not standing, but sitting or kneeling next to *Linda*, which documents a permanent positioning. She draws intently on the sheet of paper in front of *Linda*—although it is not clear whether she intervenes in the pupil's work or takes over the whole assignment. In both cases, however, she encroaches on the pupil's personal and possessional territory (Goffman, 1983). While *Pablo*, on the other hand, has to solve the task alone, he is physically and spatially restricted in his autonomy by the teacher's position; the teacher, in turn, does not refer to the action/product of the pupil, which documents an ambivalent bodily-spatial position on his part. In *Linda's* case, it is the opposite: *Mrs. Seematter* takes over her job and thus denies her autonomy. But here, too, ambivalence is evident, since *Linda* is at the same time partially turned away from the work material, which is connected to the SEN teacher's doing the work for her.

The other pupils depicted contrast with *Pablo* and *Linda*. *Toby* and *Timur* directly interact with each other and face away from the table. This appears to involve the misappropriation of parts of the assignment, with *Timur* placing a long strip of paper around *Toby's* shoulders. *Isabella* is also turned away from the table and facing *Toby* and *Timur*, while *Edonita* appears to be walking. Because of *Edonita's* orientation toward the teacher and her hand raising, she seems to be addressing *Mr. Krause* comparably to *Gordana*, although she physically indicates the addressing from a distance. At the same time, she does not look toward the teacher, and her attention seems to be directed toward something immediately in front of her. The only pupil apart from *Pablo* who seems to be working on the assignment is *Emilia*, although she is not under the direct control of a teacher.

*Linda* has an assigned SEN status. The restriction of her autonomy of action contrasts with the actions of the other pupils in the room. The intervention of the SEN teacher indicates a suspension of the pupil's opportunity to act on her own responsibility, while the other pupils seem to be able to follow the instructions of the art teacher (or not) based on their own decision, i.e., they can also distance themselves from the role expectations in the sense of *role distance* (Goffman, 1961b). The denial of the ability to act on one's own responsibility reveals aspects of *pathologization* in the sociological sense (Bohnsack, 1983, p. 75), which leads to the *total construction of a "disabled" identity* (Wagener, 2020, pp. 118). This together with the higher visibility of *Linda*

due to the way she is addressed also represent central elements of *power* according to Bohnsack (2017).

This structure is also homologous to other lessons of this class, especially for mathematics lessons, but also to the class of the second “inclusive” secondary school (Wagener, 2020, p. 118). However, there are significant differences between art and mathematics lessons in terms of the bodily-spatial separation of the actors in each case. While the art lessons are held together in the same room, in the mathematics lessons the SEN teacher usually teaches the pupils with SEN status separately in a side room. This is related to a strong focus on the subject matter and an increased expectation of autonomy in the mathematics lessons for the pupils without SEN. There, the subject matter is brought out as highly standardized (correct/incorrect), while “access” to the person or identity of the pupils recedes into the background. In the separate mathematics lessons for the pupils with SEN, the access to the person and the associated pathologization is reinforced due to the denser bodily-spatial situation. In art lessons, on the other hand, the interaction between the art teacher and the pupils without SEN focuses on the moralization of the pupils’ person, and the subject matter recedes into the background, as the following interaction between *Pablo* and *Mr. Krause* shows. It takes place after the teacher’s instruction, when *Pablo* asks *Mr. Krause* if he can go to the bathroom.

### *Sequential dimension*<sup>1</sup>

**Mr Krause stands bent over in front of Emilia and supports himself with his arms on the table.**

**Pablo:** runs to Mr. Krause, leans on the edge of the table and jumps into position next to Mr Krause  
Oh oh Mr Krause may I looks briefly at Emilia, raises his right hand in her direction  
I’m sorry. and looks at Mr Krause Mr Krause may I go to the bathroom now?

**Mr Krause:** straightens up and looks at Pablo No.

**Pablo:** @I’ve done it@ staggers backwards emphatically

**Mr Krause:** walks towards Pablo I don't think so.

**Pablo:** @Yes@ very barely, meanwhile going to his seat without making a flower.  
points to his sheet of paper

**Mr Krause:** follows Pablo and looks at the sheet of paper But now I haven't watched it at all. I'd like to see how fast you can do it.

**Pablo:** Ok, ok. takes his seat an grasps a compass

**Mr Krause:** [ One more thing. I don't think you've done that by yourself. ok. supports himself with his arms on the edge of the table and bends over Pablo's sheet of paper.

**Pablo begins to draw a circle on the sheet with the compass**

Through the teacher’s immediate denial, which is not followed by a justification, *Pablo* is on the one hand denied the satisfaction of his (elementary) need to go to the bathroom, and on the other hand he is framed as a partner in conversation or negotiation who cannot be taken seriously. *Pablo* then recalls the task that *Mr. Krause* has set as a condition for permission to use the bathroom: drawing circles with a compass (contextual knowledge). *Pablo* refers to



its fulfillment and at the same time demands that the teacher fulfills the agreement. In his laughter and exaggerated staggering backwards, an ambivalence is documented: on the one hand, an attempt to distance himself from the humiliation (Goffman, 1961b); on the other hand, he fits into the role or identity of the “supplicant” assigned to him. This identity comes along with a denial of autonomy based on the moralization of behavior. *Mr. Krause* then continues the moralization of *Pablo* by insinuating that he is telling the untruth without even looking at *Pablo’s* drawing. The pupil is seen as not possessing the competence to carry out the work assignment appropriately, as is also documented in the further course of the interaction. By approaching *Pablo* (and ending the interaction with *Emilia*), *Mr. Krause* indicates that an evaluation of *Pablo’s* “claim” will now take place. *Pablo* insists on the validity of his statement and acquiesces to the teacher’s scrutiny by going to his seat. “Very barely” implies that the drawing may not have turned out perfectly but meets the minimum requirements. The reference to the “flower” as a figure that is connected to the circles for the construction of a hexagon also implies the anticipation of an evaluation by the teacher. The drawing of a “flower” obviously forms a negative horizon, i.e., a specifically faulty drawing. In the further course of the interaction, *Pablo* has to draw the hexagon in front of the teacher.

**Pablo begins to draw a circle on the bow with the compass.**

**Mr. Krause:** is still bent over the sheet of paper Make it bigger, please.  
stands up and looks around the room.

**Pablo:** looks in the direction of Mr. Krause Like this?

**Mr. Krause** looks in the opposite direction, at Toby and Timur.

**Pablo:** O-ke. looks towards the arch again, keeps drawing like this? keeps drawing

**Mr. Krause** takes a step to the left and stands wide-legged in the centre aisle, puts his arms on his hips and looks ahead (presumably towards the blackboard)

**Pablo:** Mr. Krause? looks up briefly at Mr. Krause (like this?)

**Mr. Krause** looks at Pablo's sheet of paper.

**Pablo:** keeps drawing cut in here. draw a line here. like this.

**Mr. Krause:** Try not to press so hard or it'll get misaligned. looks around the room, then back at Pablo's sheet of paper the compass right? puts one hand on the edge of the table next to Pablo and looks ahead (towards the blackboard).

**Meanwhile, Pablo** continues to draw circles with the compass.

The control continues, and *Pablo* is asked by *Mr. Krause* to make corrections. This implies a negative evaluation of *Pablo’s* action. The control becomes fragile, however, when the teacher also seems to direct attention to other pupils (see photogram). *Pablo*, on the other hand, shows a willingness to implement *Mr. Krause’s* demands and asks for his confirmation several times, while *Mr. Krause* continues not to direct attention to *Pablo’s* drawing and also does not

react to his inquiries. In the teacher's physical change of position, through which he takes up an even greater physical distance to *Pablo* and his drawing, the maximum increase in the loss of the material reference occurs. *Pablo* then demands *Mr. Krause's* attention more clearly and verbalizes his action steps (in a rudimentary way): what the teacher does not see or is not willing to see is now presented to him acoustically. *Mr. Krause* then turns his attention back to *Pablo* and his drawing and instructs him on the correct handling of the circle, which again implies a negative evaluation of his actions. In contrast, there is no explicit commentary on the drawing at any point, which means that the factual reference (still) remains precarious. The ambivalent moment in the control action then continues: on the one hand, *Mr. Krause* occupies *Pablo's* table with his hand, marking his presence and restricting *Pablo's* possibility of distancing himself; on the other hand, he keeps an eye on other activities in the room, in which precarious reference to the pupil's creative artifact continues.

In summary, in art lessons, the interaction between the art teacher and the pupils without SEN status is characterized by a moralization of the pupils, while the reference to the subject matter is marginal. This arbitrary mode of interaction indicates a missing conjunctive space of experience (Bohnsack, 2017, p. 270). This mode was evident in the art lessons in both secondary schools, while the art lessons in one grammar school showed a strong subject orientation. In contrast, mathematics lessons showed clear tendencies toward subject orientation in the entire sample, i.e., also in the grammar schools without an "inclusive" program (Wagener, 2020, p. 153). In mathematics lessons, in turn, the interactions between the subject teachers and the pupils without SEN constitute a conjunctive space of experience, which is characterized by an increased expectation of the pupils' personal responsibility for their performance. In the context of a focus on the subject matter in the interaction, which is also highly standardized, access to the person and thus construction of a (total) identity is missing. This is very different compared to the interaction system of the SEN teachers and the SEN pupils in both art and mathematics lessons. They are essentially characterized by the denial of autonomous action and the associated interference in the personal territories of the pupils, as well as restrictions of their autonomy of action, which in mathematics lessons is in turn associated with the complete exclusion from the joint lessons. These (partly) simultaneously existing conjunctive spaces of experience are in turn characterized by power-structured interactions (Wagener, 2020, p. 118).

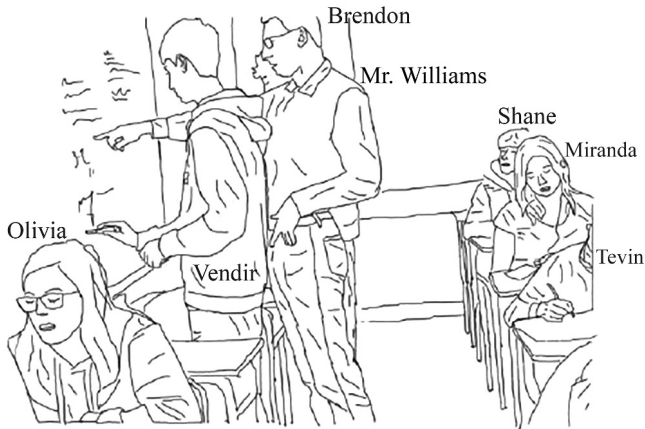
*Primary framing through subject matter reference and individualization:  
A mathematics lesson in a Canadian secondary school*

The sequence "Gentlemen. Did it work?" was selected from the project *The Construction of Difference in Schools and Its Social Genesis—An International Comparison* (Sturm, 2019). The Canadian sample comprises math and social science classes of two secondary schools in an urban region of British Columbia. *Mr. Williams* is a math teacher in one of the Canadian schools whose

classroom was a site for data collection. The class is attended by pupils with and without Individual Educational Plans (IEPs). One of the pupils with an IEP is being accompanied by an educational assistant. The lessons in the school last 80 minutes and are taught in English. During a part of *Mr. Williams's* lessons, the pupils are working on equations on whiteboards that are installed along the four walls of the room. While the pupils do so, *Mr. Williams* walks around talking to each of them on their calculations. A sequence lasting 1 minute, 12 seconds was chosen because it pictures a typical bodily-spatial situation for this second part of the lesson. Moreover, it is a focused act for the research interest, because the topic of the conversation between the teacher and the pupil is the correction of an incorrect calculation. Since we do not have the permission of all people pictured, we provide sketches.

### *Simultaneous dimension*

In the left center of this image, there is an interaction between *Vendir* and *Mr. Williams*. With the pointing gesture of *Mr. Williams* and the writing of *Vendir*, both refer to the equation on the whiteboard in front of them. The frontal orientation in the alignment of the few visible desks and the pupils seated at them is being broken by the fact that they are standing. It is not only their position that differs, but also the way that each in the dyad relates to a common matter, the equation, written on the board that *Mr. Williams* and *Vendir* refer to; while the other pictured pupils are sitting and are seemingly individually following something in a personal space and a possessional territory. *Shane*, who is shown sitting on the right side of the photogram, appears to be observing the interaction between *Mr. Williams* and *Vendir*. *Brendon's* face is pictured behind *Vendir's* and *Mr. Williams*, he is facing another equation in front of him on the whiteboard.

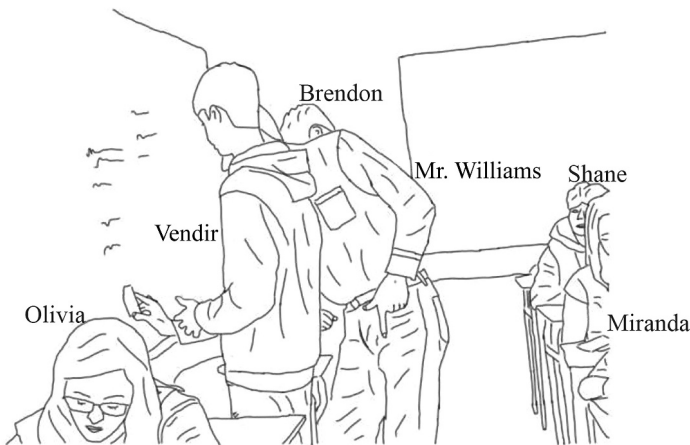


*Figure 10.2* Sketch of photogram 1.

The teacher's pointing to a specific part of the notation documents both his engagement as well as a point of focus, while *Vendir* writes something, which makes him the producer of the notation. The photogram indicates that they both refer to a common subject matter: the equation, or to some part of it. *Mr. Williams* is standing slightly behind *Vendir*. While standing behind the pupils, just his arms seem to enter the personal space of his pupils. The teacher's position differs from both *Vendir's* and *Brendon's* proximity to the board and indicates that he takes a less active role in the equation as well as a nonpermanent (or longer) stay.

In the second photogram, which was taken 8 seconds after the first one, the position of the camera has slightly changed. *Mr. Williams* seems to erase part of *Vendir's* equation. *Vendir* seems to observe him holding a sponge to his written equation. Compared to the first photogram, *Mr. Williams* is bent forward and encroaching into both *Vendir's* territory and his math product on the board. By doing so, *Mr. Williams* is framing the equation as incorrect according to his interpretative sovereignty (*Deutungshoheit*). *Vendir* observes him, and *Vendir's* body is a little more distanced from the board than earlier, which indicates that he feels his personal space being encroached.

Comparing the two stills from this math class documents dyadic and cooperative action around the equation. Both photograms show that the standing, interacting actors have a prominent position in relation to the others. They are on eye level, similar to the teacher-pupil relation in the Swiss case of an art class. While *Mr. Williams* is active in both pictures (pointing gesture, wiping the equation), *Vendir* is active in the first and observing in the second. All in all, the comparative analysis of the two images shows a teaching-learning situation: a pupil and a teacher are dealing with an equation created by the pupil. However, in the case of *Mr. Williams's* class, the pupils—except *Vendir*—are



*Figure 10.3* Sketch of photogram 2.

individually engaged in various things, while they are interacting with each other in *Mr. Krause's* class. Although the seating is oriented frontally toward a teacher's desk in both settings, it is broken up to a greater or lesser extent by the positioning of the people. Not only does the spatial context and its use by the actors differ, but so does the media that is positioned and used in the lessons: especially the pupils' products on the board in the Canadian case seem to be less permanent than the paper-and-pencil products of the Swiss pupils.

### *Sequential dimension*

The name of the sequence relates to the context of which will be shown here: while *Vendir* and *Brendon* stand side by side writing something on the board in front of them, *Mr. Williams* steps into the camera frame and says loudly, "Gentlemen. Did it work?". *Brendon* and *Vendir* physically turn briefly in his direction, *Brendon* says quietly, "yeah", and *Vendir*, "kind of". Then the two turn back to the board and look at the notation in front of *Vendir*, while *Mr. Williams* walks toward them, looking first over *Vendir's* left shoulder, steps between the two pupils, stays slightly behind them and looks at the equation in front of *Vendir* saying, "so let's see what happened".

- Mr. Williams:** stretches out his right arm and index finger, touches the whiteboard so: everything we did to here was okay while he runs his right hand over the lines of the calculation and then you combined (.) that looks good and you combined (.) pulls his right hand to his chin, tilts his head down in the direction where *Vendir* is notating, moves his right hand forward down to the last line of the equation okay and then you: added.
- Vendir** interrupts his writing process, points to the middle of the equation I got confused with this part here, (.) .
- Mr. Williams:** ah okay bends the upper body forward, reaches with the right hand for the sponge lying on the ledge below the whiteboard, ah okay so so can I take this up, wipes away one line of the equation, puts the sponge back down and straightens the upper body so remember the rule, whatever you do to one side you have to do to the same to the other points with the right hand to the bottom line of the equation, bends the head slightly forward so what did you decide to do here?
- Vendir:** opens the pen add the subtract
- Mr. Williams:** exactly (.)
- Vendir:** notes something in the bottom line of the equation
- Mr. Williams:** points with the right hand to the lower center of the equation so what happens to these ones, (.) pulls the right hand back to the waistband of the pants.
- Vendir:** stops writing eh the cancel each other (..)
- Mr. Williams:** yup
- Vendir:** and this will be.
- Mr. Williams:** four minus thirteen
- Vendir:** negative nine.
- Mr. Williams:** (mhh) and on the other side what do you got, (2).
- Vendir:** ↑(eh this will be)\*.
- Mr. Williams:** and how do we go with another three, (3). so what do you end up with, (2)
- Vendir:** eh (.) n (.) equals (.) negative three.
- Mr. Williams:** turns the head to *Vendir* and runs his right hand over the equation exactly (.) and if you check that out you gonna find out you gonna get the same answer
- Vendir:** okay.
- Mr. Williams:** turns head and body to the right to *Brendon* did you worked on the same one.

With his outstretched right index finger, *Mr. Williams* moves from top to bottom of the equation, retracing the substeps of it. Along with his verbal expression, a differentiated examination of the pupil's calculation is documented, while the pupil continues to note something. *Mr. Williams* says, using the "we" form and pointing to one of the lower lines of the equation, "so: everything we did to here was okay", thus including himself rhetorically in the situation. The "okay" seems to indicate that the work is correct in terms of an unquestioned understanding of in/correct how to solve the equation. *Mr. Williams* continues, distinguishing this for different parts to the equation. Other than the picture, the view of the sequence indicates that the pointing gesture of *Mr. Williams* is likely part of his examination of *Vendir's* equation. He points to a spot in the middle of the noted calculation, he switches to the "you" form, he recognizes the product on the board as *Vendir's*, and distances himself from its production, by stating that *Vendir's* "added" something. *Vendir* differentiates this by stopping his writing and pointing to a part of the calculation, saying that he was "confused" there. *Mr. Williams* ratifies this, leans forward to reach for the sponge and asks if he can "take this line up" while he wipes. His question seems to be rhetorical, because at the same time, he starts wiping. In doing so, he differentiates *Vendir's* assumption, that a specific part of the calculation was confusing him, opening possible (space) for a correct equation on the board. He is not only assessing the calculation as incorrect and *Vendir's* confusion as given, but framing himself as the one knowing how to get to the correct/expected answer. The teacher's approach is related to the product on the board, which should be done "correctly". *Mr. Williams* then straightens his torso and transforms the situation by verbally addressing *Vendir*, reminding him of the mathematical rules that need to be applied when solving equations. Implicitly, he says that *Vendir* did not apply these rules, which led to the incorrect result. By naming the rule, he supports him applying it. By pointing to another part of the equation and asking *Vendir* what he did there, *Mr. Williams* implicitly refers to another incorrect notation. *Vendir* loosens the lid of the pen and says, "add the subtract", which is validated by *Mr. Williams*. *Vendir* ratifies the accuracy that the teacher verbally called out by writing it on the board, while *Mr. Williams* continues to ask him while pointing to different parts of the notation, before he withdraws his hand, putting himself in the position of an observer. The interaction continues in this question-answer-assessment scheme that is issue-related, focusing on *Vendir's* equation for a while. *Mr. Williams* transposes the theme by saying to *Vendir*, "and if you check that out you gonna find out you gonna get the same answer", which documents that the process of applying the mathematical rules is central, not the result itself, as in the Swiss art class. *Mr. Williams* names a rule along which it is possible to recognize whether a result is correct. Here again, it is documented that the teacher explains to the pupil the rules to be applied in contrast to *Mr. Krause* who tells what to do or *Mrs. Seematter*, who takes over the tasks in proxy for the pupil. *Mr. Williams* concludes the interaction with *Vendir* by physically turning toward *Brendon*.

The primary framing of a subject matter reference of the sequence “Gentlemen. Did it work?” is homologous with other data analyzed from math classes in this Canadian secondary school, both in *Mr. Williams’s* class and the one of his colleague *Mrs. Wilson* (Sturm, 2021). The work on the board can be characterized as momentary as well as being focused on processes. The material of the board makes it to erase written things as a means of correcting an incorrect path taken. In contrast to the art class from Switzerland as well as the math classes investigated in the same project, not only are the results of tasks central, but also the process of getting to a result. While *Mr. Krause* mainly judges *Pablo’s* work and tells him what to do, *Mr. Williams* make it clear that he is confused in relation to *Vendir’s* equation. Here it is documented not only that *Vendir* understands the teacher as someone who helps him to work on the problem, but that this is also possible without experiencing comparable degradations. The incorrect application of rules or mistakes are not comparably understood as individual problems here.

While in the case of the Swiss inclusive secondary school, pupils with or without ascribed SEN are taught together in art, but mainly separated in mathematics, in the Canadian case math lessons like any other take place together. *Mr. Williams* engages with *all* pupils in the tasks they are working on, regardless of the IEP assigned to. Thus, the physical proximity to the teacher in the Canadian example is temporary and, like the associated verbal communications, related to the matter at hand. The teacher’s address of *Vendir* and *Brendon*, which gives the sequence its name, also indicates that the teacher speaks to the pupils several times during a lesson. Teacher and pupils share a classroom space of experience in which subject-related conversations along in-/correctly applied mathematical rules constitute the primary framing. The teacher, in his role or in the social identity attributed to him, possesses this knowledge of the subject-related norms or the correct application of the rules. This is not questioned by anyone. Although the teacher in the Canadian case also attributes the product of the pupils to the pupils themselves, a comparable attribution of individual responsibility is not documented in the case of art and also mathematics lessons in the Swiss study. The maintenance or loss of clear reference to the subject matter at hand is also absent in the Swiss example. Moreover, there is no comparable negative evaluation, as is found in the Swiss case. What is instead documented is a cooperative correction of *Vendir’s* calculation, guided by the teacher’s explanation of the mathematical rules.

*Conclusion: Summary and perspectives for research on inclusion and exclusion in classroom practices*

Summing up, the comparison shows that teaching in the Canadian case is characterized by a constituent framing in which the content accuracy of calculations is central. It is habitualized by both teacher and pupil. The pupils receive support from the teacher when they do not meet this requirement. Against this background, a central difference is that teaching in the Swiss case

is not comparably characterized by cooperation and teaching, but by individual attributions and hierarchizations, even under the loss of any relation to the content. This perspective of international comparison cannot be generalized in terms of “Swiss” and “Canadian” examples (Baur et al., 2021). These results lead to the question of the “genealogy of meaning” (Mannheim, 1982, p. 204) of the different classroom practices.

In the two segments studied, we applied the categories of the PSK with special consideration of performativity and space to reconstruct classroom practices and to generate new findings. These go beyond purely verbal analyses of teaching, as shown in the cases presented. The reconstructive analysis of performativity and space as a central element of the documentary analysis reveals forms and relations of inclusion and exclusion in instructional practices on the level of simultaneity as well as of sequentiality. A particularly striking difference is the consistently close bodily-spatial address of pupils with an assigned SEN status within the classroom or through separate teaching in small groups, as practiced in the case of Switzerland, and which goes along with construction of total identities through the exercise of power, i.e., of the “disabled” pupil. This contrasts with the temporary subject-related support provided for all pupils by the teacher in the Canadian case. In addition, the Canadian case shows a teaching arrangement that focuses more on learning processes and considers pupils’ products from the point of view of the work processes behind them. This has implications not only for the process structure of the interaction between teacher and pupil, but also for the material-spatial equipment and practice of lessons, as was made clear in the example of calculations on the whiteboard. In contrast, the Swiss art lessons showed a materially fixed orientation toward results with a simultaneous marginal reference to the product and moralization by the art teacher. The Swiss mathematics lessons also showed a strong product orientation without moralization, but also a lack of personal access and a high level of personal responsibility for the learning process, and thus an increased risk of exclusion. Overall, a construction of “disabled” identity can be identified across subjects for the Swiss lessons studied—in the context of loosely coupled, parallel systems of interaction which prevent joint participation and lead to barriers in learning processes. The comparison shows that continuous reference to the subject matter at hand, which takes place without attributions of identity and individual responsibility for the learning process, does not produce comparable barriers to subject-based engagement.

Through our methodological adaptations and our empirical reconstructions of classroom situations, we hope to contribute to scholarship on the connection of spatial or territorial (power) relations in pedagogical contexts (Nugel, 2016). We also see this chapter as initially addressing a desideratum for the study of space and spatiality in education—namely, to develop “[a] theoretical and research perspective ... that can be used to ask about the educational potential of social and, in particular, pedagogical spatial relations with regard to practices of power and subjectivation interwoven within them”



(Nugel, 2016, S. 9). We understand “subjectification practices” here as identity constructions in the sense of Goffman and the Praxeological Sociology of Knowledge, both of which are in the tradition of ethnomethodology. We have also emphasized the relevance of the “spatial conditions and effects of different teaching forms and situations” (Breidenstein, 2004, p. 104) in schools. We have done this while underscoring spatial practices in conjunction with the “shaping of relationships” (Breidenstein, 2004, p. 104). For inclusive education, Andreas Köpfer (2016, p. 83) has proposed the empirical investigation of “spatial arrangements evoke education and participation in the context of inclusive school and classroom development, or how experiences of disability are produced and manifested through them”. In our view, an analytical perspective on video-based research that is methodologically based on the categories of territories of the self (Goffman, 1983) and the notion of “conjunctive space of ... experience” (Mannheim, 1982, p. 199) appears particularly promising. This is because such research would not be limited to processes of exclusion and inclusion alone. Instead, the research would also be able to reconstruct the relations and interactions of these processes as well as their role in the emergence of constructions of difference and power (relations) in teaching contexts. However, such a microanalytical and spatially oriented research on school and inclusion has only just begun.

## Note

- 1 The verbal transcription follows “TiQ” (Bohnsack, 2009). @()@ means that something is said laughingly.

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# 11 Learning spaces at the intersections of families and preschools

*Hanna Ragnarsdóttir*

## **Introduction**

Migration to Iceland has grown rapidly in recent years, and the population of Iceland is quite diverse in terms of country of birth and languages. The diversification of Iceland's population is reflected in student populations at all education levels.

The aims of the study described in this chapter are to explore diverse educational practices in multicultural and multilingual settings in Icelandic preschools, how these create contexts and learning spaces of social justice for diverse learners, and what challenges are experienced by teachers, principals, and parents. A further objective is to explore how these preschools build on educational partnerships with parents to create inclusive educational spaces.

The study is directed by the following research questions:

- What educational practices are in place in multicultural and multilingual settings in Icelandic preschools?
- How do these practices create learning spaces of inclusion and social justice for diverse learners?
- What challenges are experienced by teachers, principals, and parents?
- How do preschools and parents interact to develop mutual learning spaces of social justice for children?

The research involves first-generation immigrant families, who have diverse languages, as well as their children's teachers and principals at the preschool level.

## **Background and context**

The languages, cultures, and religions of Iceland's population have become increasingly diverse in recent decades. Iceland has a small total population of 368,792 on January 1, 2021, (Statistics Iceland, 2022c), so the changing demographics have had a large impact on society as well as the education system. The ratio of non-Icelandic citizens to the total population was 2.6% in 2000 and 13.9% in 2021 (Statistics Iceland, 2022b). The diversification of the

population is apparent at all school levels. In 2020, 15.6% of all preschool children (Statistics Iceland, 2022a) and 12% of all compulsory school pupils had other heritage languages than Icelandic (Statistics Iceland, 2022d). These languages and heritage language groups are quite diverse and differ in size. While the language groups have not been documented in detail, countries of birth are documented in national statistics in Iceland. In 2021, 20,553 people whose country of birth is Poland lived in Iceland, which makes Polish by far the largest group of immigrants. Smaller groups are many and diverse. These include, for example: Hungarian born, 550 people; Latvian born, 2,087; Philippines born, 2,276; and Syrian born, 402 (for more detail, see Statistics Iceland, 2022c).

Municipalities in Iceland operate preschools and compulsory schools. Municipalities develop their own educational policies, while they should also adhere to the general education policies and national curriculum guides issues by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (n.d.). Children in Iceland begin preschool on average at the age of 1 to 2, and most children in Iceland attend preschools. Compulsory schools include ten grades. Children start compulsory school at the age of 5 or 6 and finish at the age of 16.

Educational policies and curriculum guides in Iceland generally emphasize equity and inclusion (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, n.d.). A fundamental principle of the Icelandic education system is that everyone must have equal access to education irrespective of sex, economic status, geographic location, religion, disability, and cultural or social background. Six fundamental pillars underpin educational policy in the National Curriculum Guides. These are literacy, sustainability, health and welfare, democracy and human rights, equality, and creativity. Additionally, some policies regarding multicultural and multilingual issues in education have been developed in recent years. Thus, in September 2020, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture published *Guidelines for the Support of Mother Tongues and Active Plurilingualism in Schools and After-school Programs* (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 2020). In the introduction to the guidelines, it is stated that “knowledge of more than one language is a treasure that must be nurtured and developed, as all languages open up the doors to different cultures and make our lives richer” (p. 4).

### **Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework includes writings on diverse learning spaces for social justice and inclusion, as well as culturally and linguistically responsive educational practices and how these approaches can contribute to the development of inclusive learning spaces in educational settings.

#### *Learning spaces for social justice and inclusion*

In this chapter, *learning spaces* refer to different learning environments, such as school communities and other practices besides schools, which may be important or instrumental for children’s participation and inclusion. Learning spaces

can be developed within schools as well as within families, or at the intersections of these. These learning spaces include resources, social contexts, and networks that encourage, develop, and nurture learning, supporting children in becoming agents of their own learning and active participants in schools and society. The concept of learning spaces allows us to explore how the issues of social justice and equity are embedded in the learning process (Gee, 2004; Ragnarsdóttir & Kulbrandstad, 2018). Responding to Wenger's concept of community of practice (Wenger, 1998), Gee (2004) has suggested using the concept of "spaces" instead, referring to an "important social configuration in which people participate and learn" (p. 77). He argues that if the concept of spaces is used rather than communities, the question can be asked, "to what extent the people interacting within a space, or some subgroup of them, do or do not actually form a community" (p. 78). He argues further that even though people interacting within a space do not constitute a community, they still may benefit from their interactions with others and share a good deal with them. This understanding of the concept of space, as defined by Gee, will be applied in this chapter.

According to Booth (2010), inclusion is an ongoing process focusing on increased participation in education for everyone involved to work against inequality and increase people's sense of belonging in school and society. Inclusive schools should find ways to educate all their students successfully, thus working against discrimination and leading to an inclusive and just society where everyone is a valid participant (Slee, 2011). Inclusive practices are grounded in the ideologies of social justice, democracy, human rights, and the full participation of all (Ainscow, 2005; Florian, 2008). These ideologies are interconnected and dependent on each other in various ways.

### *Culturally and linguistically responsive educational practices*

Many scholars have explored and discussed the benefits of bi- and multilingualism for individuals and societies (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Cummins, 2004; Hellman et al., 2018; Ragnarsdóttir & Schmidt, 2014). To empower bi- and multilingual children and respond to their needs, schools need to create inclusive learning spaces where diverse backgrounds and identities are welcomed (Chumak-Horbatsch, 2012; Cummins, 2001). Furthermore, inclusive linguistic practices are needed to enhance the learning of all children in linguistically and culturally diverse learning contexts. Similarly, culturally responsive, or culturally sensitive, teaching practices entail using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference and performance styles of diverse students while teaching, to make learning more relevant, meaningful, and effective for them (Gay, 2010). According to Nieto (2010), developing empowering multicultural learning communities within the educational system will facilitate the inclusion and participation of all children. Furthermore, Schwartz and Palviainen (2016) have pointed out that it is important to be aware of the complexities of children's linguistic backgrounds as well as the diversity of language models and their hybrid, dynamic, and flexible nature.

To develop educational spaces that consider and build on children's and parents' multilingual and multicultural lives requires active cooperation of schools and families to support their multilingualism and counteract their marginalization (Ragnarsdóttir, 2018).

Robinson and Díaz (2006) have argued that some families who come from minority sociocultural backgrounds are perceived as being culturally or linguistically deprived. It is therefore crucial that schools and teachers build on the cultural, linguistic, and social capital of families and children from diverse backgrounds. Furthermore, Devarakonda (2013) notes that it is important that children and their parents are encouraged to be firmly rooted in their own cultures and languages.

### *Learning spaces at the intersections of schools and families*

To create learning spaces for social justice and inclusion for all children, educational partnerships of schools and families are important. Schools have the responsibility to reach out to families with the aim of building on their languages and cultures (Ragnarsdóttir, 2018). When families have the opportunity to contribute actively with their knowledge of languages and cultures, learning spaces at the intersections of schools and families can be developed. In relation to this, it is important to consider different interaction styles, expectations, and concerns of diverse families, as Banks (2013) has noted. She also maintains that schools will lose an important voice for school development if parents are not involved. Parents can provide teachers with unique views of their children and provide various resources, such as languages and cultures. Similarly, parent involvement in schools can also benefit the family members themselves, and the children. Successful partnerships between families and schools and a holistic approach toward the diversity of children and families can facilitate the development of learning spaces at the intersection of schools and families and contribute to an empowering multilingual and multicultural educational context for the children.

### **Method**

The project is a qualitative research study with immigrant families and pre-schools. Data were collected in 2020 and 2021 in 19 semi-structured interviews with parents, teachers, and principals in three preschools in different areas of Iceland. The families lived in three municipalities in the south and southwest of Iceland and were located based on information from educational authorities. Sampling was purposive, focusing on bilingual or multilingual immigrant families. They were contacted for permission to conduct research with them and their children. The municipalities were chosen to reflect different locations and educational policies in Iceland. Two are small communities, one a rural community in the south and the other a fishing community in the southwest of Iceland. The third is a larger city. The educational offices in the selected municipalities

were contacted for permission to conduct research in the preschools of the children, whose families were chosen for the project. Preschool principals in the selected preschools were contacted for permission to invite the children's teachers—who were also heads of their divisions—to participate in the research. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten parents, all mothers, in nine families (one parent in eight families and two parents together in one family), as well as with six teachers and four principals in the three preschools. Each participant was interviewed once. The parents were interviewed in the families' home or online, based on their choice and depending on the situation of the pandemic. In one of the preschools, the staff were interviewed in the preschool, while in the other two preschools, they were interviewed online.

The nine families have diverse heritage languages and belong to both small and large language groups in Iceland. The languages spoken by these families at home are Polish, Romanian, Hungarian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Serbian, Spanish, English, and Icelandic. Parents in six of the nine families have different heritage languages and use English for communication at home. The parents had lived in Iceland for 2 to 20 years, and their age ranged from 25 to 43 years old at the time of the interviews. The parents had finished upper secondary to higher education. The semi-structured interviews, using interview guides developed by the researcher, were chosen to elicit the experiences and views of the participants as clearly and accurately as possible (Flick, 2006; Kvale, 2007). Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to organize the contents of the interviews, while simultaneously providing flexibility and giving the participants the opportunities to discuss the chosen contents openly.

The interviews with the parents were conducted in English or Icelandic, based on their choice. All parents in the study were fluent in one of these two languages. The interviews with the preschool staff were conducted in Icelandic. Excerpts from the interviews conducted in Icelandic were translated into English by the author. Data collection also included content analysis of national curriculum guides (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, n.d.), law, and regulations on education, in addition to municipal and school policies.

The individual interviews were transcribed verbatim. The study is inductive. The interviews were analyzed through thematic analysis (Creswell, 2009) using Atlas.ti software for coding the interviews. The author familiarized herself with the data through reading the interviews, and then the interviews were coded using the complete coding approach with researcher-derived codes applied to the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). After using Atlas.ti to obtain an overview of the coding, the initial codes were reevaluated and thematically similar codes were grouped into categories to develop the final themes.

The project followed the usual practices of ethics in relation to research on Humans: Respect of the rights, interests and dignity of the participants and related persons. The research was carried out in accordance with the Data Protection Authority; Act no. 90/2018 on Data Protection and the Processing of Personal Data and the Code of Research Ethics for Public Higher Education Institutions (n.d.). An informed consent form was prepared in Icelandic



and English, languages understood by the prospective participants and presented to them. An informed consent was obtained from all participants. The ethical principle of beneficence according to Kvale (1996) means that the risk of harm to a subject should be the least possible. These ethical guidelines were taken into consideration during the research process.

## Findings

The findings indicate that the preschools have developed various educational practices and implement inclusive approaches according to the fundamental principle of Icelandic educational policy. The development of linguistically and culturally responsive educational practices has been initiated in the preschools, but these are not thoroughly or consistently implemented. Both the preschool staff and parents agree that they have good cooperation and communication, although some parents note that they would appreciate more consistent information. The main themes derived from the data are *linguistic and culturally responsive educational practices in the preschools*, and *learning spaces at the intersections of the families and the preschools*.

### *Linguistic and culturally responsive educational practices in the preschools*

The preschools are all aware of the multiple languages of the children and families, but the development of language policies and implementation of these is not consistent. However, all preschools emphasize inclusive approaches as well as supporting all the children's languages.

The principal of preschool 1 noted how they emphasized educational practices involving all children, rather than special teaching for individual children and small groups. She noted:

We of course try to have all the children together in their group, not separately, ... in special teaching ... we think it is important ... this is not special teaching for children of foreign backgrounds, here they don't need special teaching, perhaps a little extra support in Icelandic ... so here the material is very accessible and visible in the preschool divisions. ... there is group work, reading books ... a lot of singing and talking ... working together ... letters and numbers are visible in the divisions.

(Principal 1, Preschool 1)

This was a clear emphasis of inclusion and participation of all children rather than separation. Another example was described by one of the mothers who told about how she experienced the educational practices in the same preschool:

I have noticed some things like for instance they have this little house and when (my daughter) comes to preschool they are showing her ... and she has to put her picture in the house like she arrived, and they have

these games with the board and games with sand and senses, so they are teaching her senses. They are teaching sign language and they are always exploring nature. (Mother, Latvian, 25 y.o.)

This example reveals how the children participated from the moment they arrived in the preschool in the morning.

While all languages are welcomed and appreciated in the preschools, the main language used in the preschools is Icelandic. A teacher in preschool 1 said:

For example, if there are two Polish children playing together ... then you know we don't interfere if they speak Polish together and play together in Polish, but as soon as another child joins, perhaps an Icelandic child who does not understand, then we say that now we will speak a language together that they all understand so that they can all join in the play. We never forbid the use of their own language ... but we always include this also ... so that every child can understand and participate.

(Teacher, preschool 1)

Although Icelandic is the main language used in the preschools, the preschools also actively supported the children's heritage languages. A preschool teacher in preschool 1 described how she tries to encourage the children who speak many languages and be proud of this:

We were talking about ... what languages we speak at home and she just ... "yes, I know this language and that language and that language", and I said, yes, you speak four languages! ... she was very proud of this ... when I asked her to say, ... how do I say green in (one of her languages), how about in (another of her languages), so you could see that she felt that this was a bit silly, but still it made her proud.

(Teacher, preschool 1)

All three preschool principals emphasized that they respected all the languages of the children and that the teachers tried to connect to the languages in their everyday practices. The principal of preschool 3 said:

We also ask if we are, for example learning new words or if they are curious about some strange words, particularly the older children, you know, this word means this in Icelandic, how do we say it in Polish? How do we say it in Spanish? So that, you know we ... use the diversity for something positive also, to learn ... from each other so that they also feel like, my language matters, it is important that they also feel, you know that, I can speak Icelandic and Polish, this is rather great.

(Principal, preschool 3)

The principal in preschool 2 described how they encouraged the children to speak Icelandic while playing in groups to prevent the marginalization of children. She also noted that they respected all languages and emphasized the understanding that a child coming to the preschool with another heritage language would need more time to learn Icelandic than children who had Icelandic as a heritage language:

I emphasize very much that we respect all languages and that there is not one ... dominant language here, we speak ten or more languages in the preschool ... My opinion is that our mother tongue is such a large part of our identity and I always say that when the children start here in the preschool, they come here 18 months or two years old and one is Polish and has been only in a Polish environment and the other is Icelandic, then they are on an equal level. I explained this for my staff ... they are perhaps equally strong linguistically, but now one of these children is going to learn Icelandic as well, and this slows down the language acquisition, and this is more of a task for us. I had to, in the beginning, make people understand that we must reach the children, go to their level.

(Principal, preschool 2)

The preschool teachers described, for example, how they presented the daily schedules in a visual way for the children, so that they would learn from the beginning about the daily schedule, connect pictures to words, and feel safe. The teachers printed out words in the heritage languages of the children and put these on various objects and places in the preschools to support the heritage language awareness of all the children.

Although the parents were generally happy about the educational practices in the schools, some of them worried about the language development of their children. One mother worried that her child might lose her mother tongue and not learn Icelandic well either:

I've met people with kids and the kids, they didn't really know any language, so I definitely didn't want to do that ... so they didn't know what the mothers or the parents, they wouldn't know the language from the country they lived in too well, you know ... it seems like a big problem to me so I have decided myself to let the preschool teachers and the school teachers take care of Icelandic and I myself took good care of Polish.

(Mother, Polish, 37 y.o.)

This parent had concerns about her child's language development and decided that it would be the best way that the preschool took care of teaching her child Icelandic, as she found that she did not know the language well enough.

The parents had a diverse way of supporting their children's heritage languages at home, and many described this with great enthusiasm. One mother noted:

My husband prefers to just tell the stories, but I support the idea of reading so she can understand the connection between the words and what's written in the book. So, we are doing this and the last time when we went home, we bought books in (my HL) with rhymes and poems to help her and sometimes we try to play games with the letters also. She likes music, so she is listening to songs in different languages ... since she was very small, and we were reading to her every night since she was a baby. Either my husband or me but it's a little bit more from my side, but yeah, (his HL) is also there. And we try to do it equally but of course it's not. We let her listen to stories in (his HL) and (my HL) and songs and she is watching cartoons in the original languages.

(Mother, Hungarian, 33 y.o.)

At the same time the parents found it very important that their children would learn Icelandic so that they could communicate with their peers and be active participants in Icelandic schools and society. One mother noted in a similar way:

I mean I want her to learn it in the kindergarten, in preschool, because it is very important, she can communicate with the other kids. Because I know that there are many kids who are from other countries as well, but in the preschool the ... how to say ... the common language is not going to be English. It is going to be Icelandic, so it's very important for her also to be able to communicate there. So, and in my opinion when the kid is small, it's good to learn as much as possible. Because this is the time for ... the opportunity to learn. Like when she's going to get older it's going to be harder.

(Mother, Latvian, 25 y.o.)

#### *Learning spaces at the intersections of the families and the preschools*

Parents and preschool staff were generally happy about their communication and cooperation. The communication between the parents and preschools took place within the preschools when the parents brought or picked up the children, by phone, messages or by email. One mother described how happy she was with the preschool and how she felt her daughter had developed well since starting there:

I am very happy that she is going there ... because I feel that she has grown so much she wasn't even eating by herself in the beginning. I think she was really, really confused when she went there because of this ... all languages thing and everything.

(Mother, Latvian, 25 y.o.)

Furthermore, the parents talked about having good access to the staff if they needed to talk to either a teacher or principal about their children. One mother said:

On everyday matters I run to (the head of division) and if there is something then I talk to her ... but if there is something more serious or I think it needs to be discussed with (the principal) ... I go to (the principal) and ask her if she has time and we can talk about things.

(Mother, Hungarian, 33 y.o.)

This mother was happy about how easy it was for her to have contact with the principal and the head of division if she felt that she needed to.

One mother described how happy she was with the preschool. Her son had a disability and needed special care. She said:

I love them. I think we are so, so, so happy. Yeah, I feel like there is like a lot of cooperation between me and the school ... I feel a lot of support from them.

(Mother, Polish, 37 y.o.)

She added that she had experienced great understanding as her child was attending a Polish heritage language school. She noted:

They sometimes had to skip school and they have been so amazingly supportive of that they were like saying like "It's important to know the mother tongue because then you can build this wonderful base for other languages to come to your brain".

(Mother, Polish, 37 y.o.)

The parents also seemed to be aware of how languages were used and supported in the preschools, and they appreciated this. One mother said:

What I know is that Icelandic is the language spoken in the kindergarten but there is space for other mother languages if there is proportion of kids that are Polish or have Polish parent maybe one or two. This is just what I was told in the beginning ... and then they speak together in their own languages and that's perfectly fine and ... so I think there is acknowledgement that you can have other mother languages than just Icelandic but ... there is some flexibility there.

(Mother Serbian, 38 y.o.)

The principals and the preschool teachers agreed that the communication with parents was good and that they tried to keep it flexible and open. One preschool principal noted this:

We have always told the parents that they can always come to us, if there is anything, we are always ready to assist. Then we have parents' mornings ... there were so many foreign women with newborn children who could then come and meet each other and join the community a little ... meet others and chat ... because they often become isolated, so we have been developing and trying different things to see what is suitable for this community and in cooperation with the parents too, what they want to have, what they like and what is missing.

(Principal, preschool 1)

Furthermore, the teachers and principals emphasized that they all encouraged the parents to speak to their children in their heritage languages to support their bi- or multilingualism.

### **Discussion and conclusion**

The study described in this chapter explored diverse educational practices in multicultural and multilingual settings in Icelandic preschools, how these practices create learning contexts and spaces of inclusion and social justice for diverse learners, the kinds of challenges experienced by teachers and children, and how these schools build on educational partnerships with parents to create inclusive educational spaces.

The findings of the study indicate that various linguistically and culturally appropriate practices are developed and applied in the preschools. The teachers and principals show respect for and build on resources that the children and families bring to the preschools (Devarakonda, 2013; Gay, 2010; Ragnaradóttir & Kulbrandstad, 2018). Thus, they provide support and encouragement to the families and counteract a view of the families as being culturally or linguistically deprived (Robinson & Díaz, 2006). The teachers, principals, and parents have furthermore developed a mutually caring educational partnership where flexibility and respect are at the forefront. The teachers and principals reach out to the parents and initiate communication, and the parents are active in contacting the preschools if they need information or advice. Banks (2013) claims schools will lose an important voice for school improvement if parents are not active partners. The preschools in the study encourage the parents to participate. However, although there is interest in all the preschools, they do not actively or thoroughly build on or use the multiple language and cultural resources that the families have. There is a lack of consistency, although there is interest among both the principals and the teachers. Furthermore, although many of the parents are dedicated in applying diverse methods at home for teaching their children their heritage languages, there is a lack of communication between the schools and homes in bridging between educational practices and creating learning spaces (Gee, 2004) at the intersections of the families and the preschools.

Cummins (2001) and Chumak-Horbatsch (2012) have maintained that schools need to develop ways to implement inclusive and socially just practices where diverse backgrounds and identities are welcomed. While the preschools in the study welcome and respect the diverse languages and backgrounds of the children and their families, they do not consistently build on the linguistic resources which the families possess or connect to the heritage language practices applied in their homes.

Booth (2010) claims that inclusion is an ongoing process focusing on increased participation and increasing sense of belonging in school and society. The preschools in the study emphasize inclusive practices for all children and avoid separating children and special teaching.

To conclude, building more thoroughly on families' cultural and linguistic knowledge, and jointly developing learning spaces at the intersections of preschools and families, could contribute to an empowering multilingual and multicultural educational context for the children.

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## 12 Teaching when students are absent

A study on the relationship  
between space and inclusion based  
on the COVID crisis

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### Introduction

The closure of schools throughout Germany and almost worldwide in spring 2020, and the crisis confronting face-to-face teaching, have led to a flurry of research activity. This includes online surveys on the experiences of parents (Garbe et al., 2020; Porsch & Porsch, 2020), surveys on the practice of remote teaching (Huber et al., 2020), and the experiences of children and adolescents in this situation (Wacker et al., 2020), and studies on the way those involved are positioned (or position themselves) within the relationship between school and family based on published statements (Labede & Idel, 2020). Initial findings have highlighted the ever-widening social divide, i.e., the rise in social inequality that is thought to result from school closures; great fears are held for children who are difficult to reach in remote teaching and are completely left behind in terms of academic learning. One focus of the debates in educational policy and in the media is the question of what failings in school development have been exposed by the “stress test” (Hoffmann, 2020) of the COVID pandemic. The main conclusion drawn is that schools in Germany have a great deal of catching up to do in matters of digitization, in terms of both infrastructure and didactic concepts. At the same time, the crisis is also seen as an opportunity: it is felt that school closures can potentially boost the development of teaching and learning, by serving as a “disruptive innovation” that encourages independent and self-regulated learning (Goel & Garg, 2020; Sliwka & Kopsch, 2020).

This chapter takes a different perspective. Our focus is not so much on the effects of school closures or on possible ways of overcoming them. Instead, we want to use this crisis to focus on the “normality” of school-based teaching. We interpret the COVID crisis in the sense of a “breaching experiment” as defined by Garfinkel (1967), which suspends and thereby makes visible fundamental prerequisites and conditions of teaching. Delamont and Atkinson (2018, p. 72) point out the need for “fighting familiarity”, especially in the “all too familiar” context of educational research. Thus, the exceptional situation of the lockdown may perhaps allow insights into the “normality” which has been suspended: *What is revealed about the usually unquestioned foundations of*

*“teaching” when the joint presence of teachers and pupils in the classroom is not possible?* We focus particularly on the fundamental spatial constitution of teaching as the physical co-presence of the teacher and the members of the learning group in the classroom. Perhaps this basic spatial prerequisite of teaching can be understood, in a certain sense, as “inclusion”, as the opportunity for students to bodily participate in practices of teaching and learning (cf. Merl & Idel, 2020). At the very least, the crisis of school closures makes it clear how much any joint engagement with a subject is dependent on a practice of interaction among people present in the same place.

To investigate the research question just outlined, i.e., to use the crisis to explore the foundations of “normal” teaching, we conducted 15 qualitative online interviews with primary school teachers shortly after the general closure of schools in April 2020. We asked the teachers to tell us how they were dealing with the situation. These interviews, some of which were quite extensive, revealed very different views of (primary school) teaching. While most respondents did indeed highlight the elementary prerequisite of joint presence in the classroom, we also found a version of teaching—based on the program of individualization—which has little problem with the situation of school closures and even sees it as an opportunity. We were also able to observe online teaching<sup>1</sup> in action and to see some of the fundamental challenges presented by this format.

We will begin by evoking some discussions of space and (inclusive) teaching in educational research, and by considering how far these are relevant for us. Our next step will be to introduce our study design and methodology. We will then present our empirical analysis, using selected passages from the interviews and some field notes from our observations to identify aspects of classroom teaching which require the physical co-presence of students. Our final step, partly based on theories of space, will be to describe the classroom as a “place” shared by all school actors. In very concrete, material terms, this place constitutes the joint prerequisite for some fundamental aspects of teaching and learning.

### **The (inclusive) classroom as an object of research**

For some time, “space” has been a popular subject of research in the social sciences (cf. Schroer, 2009). In research on school education, interest in questions of space has led to a whole series of empirical research projects and has generated new perspectives on the material and immaterial significance of space (Nugel, 2016). It is very obvious—almost too obvious—that fundamental conditions of school-based teaching and learning must be described in the dimension of space. It seems self-evident to think of teaching and learning in spatial constellations: teaching takes place in classrooms, and the determining factors for teaching and learning arrangements are the seating plan, the way the classroom is set up, “front-of-class” settings, “circles” or “group tables”, etc.<sup>2</sup>

Interaction analyses of what happens in the classroom have made use of spatial descriptions from early on, particularly the distinction between the “front stage” and “back stage” of teaching (Zinnecker, 1978). Furthermore, the practices that constitute the space are connected to the material arrangement of the classroom. Rißler, Bossen, and Blasse (2014) examine the “motives for action” of a teacher establishing a (supposedly) “random” new seating plan in the classroom. They show that the teacher is influenced both by his or her pedagogical concept and by the social order and the materiality of the space.

We can use the work of Löw (2001) to develop a relational understanding of “space”, in which it is seen as both a prerequisite and a product of social practice. A distinction is made between two interlinking ways in which spaces are constituted: *spacing* is the “placing of social goods and people” (Löw, 2001, p. 158, own translation), while *synthesis* “connects goods and people to form spaces through processes of perception, imagination, or recollection” (p. 159). This means that teaching arrangements do exist as material entities, but they constitute spaces only when action is carried out. One example: children are “placed” on seats arranged in a circle, but it requires “synthesis” for this arrangement to be perceived as a “conversation circle”. Concerning the significance of material and relational spaces, it becomes clear that classrooms not only enable and prefigure teaching activities but also are the result of these activities (cf. Schroer, 2019). For our study, Löw’s distinction between “spaces” and “places” is especially important:

Generally speaking, the placings give rise to places, which influence the syntheses, both because different places lend themselves to different syntheses, and also because, symbolically and materially, positions are occupied which shape constructions of space. Spaces bring forth places, and at the same time, these places are the prerequisite for any constitution of space

(Löw, 2001, p. 203, own translation).

Breidenstein (2004) takes the concepts of Löw (2001) further and combines them with interaction analysis to differentiate spaces in the classroom. The constitution of different, overlapping spaces within classroom interactions become apparent in the distinction between larger visual spaces accessible to the eyes, the acoustic spaces which vary with the loudness of the talk (from whispering to shouting), and haptic spaces that are limited to the reach of the body (Breidenstein, 2004).

But what does the demand for “inclusion” mean for the localization of spaces in “places”, and for the constitution of “spaces” in these places? As schools are transformed and institutional differentiation decreases (e.g., the gradual abolition of special schools), attention is frequently drawn to the re-establishment of spatial differences within schools and within the classroom (Rißler & Budde, 2017). For example, so-called *Differenzierungsräume* (separated rooms, literally, “differentiation rooms”) are created, ultimately shifting

the spatial segregation and exclusivity of pupils with special educational needs into schools (Blasse et al., 2014). In particular, the appropriation of the *Differenzierungsraum* by special education staff “leads to a predisposed spatial order—in the sense of a binary division of classroom (normal space) and *Differenzierungsraum* (special space). The students with certified special educational needs appropriate this division [but in reverse]” (i.e., the *Differenzierungsraum* becomes the normal space, the classroom the special space; Köpfer, 2017, own translation).

With the focus of this chapter—investigating the constitutive and pragmatic meaning of space for the implementation of school-based teaching—we are in a sense going a step beyond studies that attempt to specify and differentiate the effects of spatial separations. The studies that seem most compatible with the type of questions we are dealing with (based on accounts of teachers’ experiences of the school closures) are those that discuss the homeschooling movement as a fundamental challenge to the place of school (Spiegler, 2008). Such studies tend to be critical of the school and question its “monopoly” as an institution. Böhme (2018) and Böhme and Hermann (2011), for example, develop a perspective on school as a material space, leading to a critique of “closed” school-based educational spaces. The “restriction of school space”, according to Böhme, should be interpreted as “the expression of an effort to preserve the school space as the exclusive place of education” (Böhme, 2018, p. 426, own translation). “In terms of school pedagogy, however, there is no justification for tying learning and education processes absolutely to a particular place” (Böhme, 2018, p. 426). Böhme also argues that it is a constitutive prerequisite for a “successful pedagogy of inclusion” “to develop a spatial conception of interconnected learning and education processes ... in which the tools of educational research must be used to define accessibility” (Böhme, 2018, p. 425). In the situation of near-universal school closures, such a utopia (or heterotopia?) of interconnected learning and education processes is forced to undergo a reality test, which we will be investigating more closely in this chapter.

From this perspective, we ask whether the (potential) expendability of school as a material place has actually been proven, or whether the crisis has instead drawn attention to (constitutive) functions of school as a place. If that is the case, perhaps there is a justification in school pedagogy for tying learning and education processes to a specific place? And perhaps the demands of inclusive pedagogy for accessibility cannot be met by the internet, but must continue to be fulfilled by real-life classrooms? The COVID crisis, which has (temporarily) closed classrooms and forced schools to open up to the internet, provides us with an opportunity to discuss these questions in greater detail.

### **Study design and methodology**

In light of the research questions outlined in the Introduction, we wanted to know more about the experiences of those who, as teachers, were suddenly affected by the school closures. How, in concrete terms, did they deal with this

situation? What didactic and pedagogical considerations played a part? And what would their accounts reveal to us about the importance of the classroom as the place of teaching? In semi-structured interviews, we asked our interviewees about an unusual experience that had—at least to some extent—given them a new perspective on the otherwise unexamined foundations of their everyday activities. The closure of schools put the “all too familiar” (Delamont & Atkinson, 2018, p. 71) to question for the teachers themselves as well as for researchers.

We looked for interviewees among our acquaintances and via an email distribution list and arranged online interviews with the primary school teachers who responded. The selection of the teachers was based on their willingness to take part in an interview; it may be surmised that in some cases this willingness sprang from a specific need to talk, or a desire to recount their innovations, for example in online teaching. In total, we conducted 15 interviews, and the spectrum of views on (primary school) teaching expressed in them was so broad that we believe our sample covers a large part of the empirical variation in interpretations of the school closures and ways of handling the situation.

The interviews, which we carried out and recorded online, required little prompting. Our opening cue, “If you think back to the day when you heard that school was closing ...”, usually gave rise to long and detailed accounts, which were often interrupted only by a small number of questions from the interviewer. The interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, and we transcribed them fully.<sup>3</sup> In addition, two teachers invited us to take part in their online lessons in the form of synchronous videoconferences. These observations gave us insights into the practical challenges of such lessons, which we will discuss in the next section, using extracts from an observational record.

When it comes to analyzing these interviews, our focus is not so much on reconstruction as on description and classification, more or less in the spirit of the “comprehensive interview” (*entretien compréhensif*) (Kaufmann, 1999). In analytical terms, we first used the interviews to contrast different presentations and positionings, and to show the great variance in the (self-)positioning of our interviewees (Breidenstein & Bossen, 2020). For this chapter, we take a broader analytical strategy, inquiring into the fundamental spatial determinants of teaching, which become apparent as a result of the closure of classrooms, and their significance for school inclusion. We initially coded the interviews openly, based on Strauss and Corbin (1990), and have formed key categories that are predominantly represented in the data (materiality of learning; the role of the parents; school as a place, etc.). In the sense of theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), we have selected contrastive cases of dealing with the condition of absence. Our interpretations show substantive variance.

In the following section, we concentrate on particularly dense and information-rich passages on the problem of the spatial foundations of school-based learning. After describing the sharply contrasting views found in the interviews, we add some comments on the structural problems of synchronous

online teaching. We finish by proposing, as a basis for future discussion, a few reflections on the significance of the classroom as a place and as the spatial foundation for school-based teaching, and on the connection between space and inclusion in the context of school-based education.

### **Empirical findings**

The classroom is evoked in a variety of ways in our interviews, through the prism of remote and online teaching. There are aspects of teaching that can be “transported” relatively straightforwardly into the home environment; for example, textbooks that were sent home with students on the last day before the school closures, or worksheets that are sent out in paper or digital form or made available on corresponding platforms. Other aspects of teaching, in contrast, seem to be less mobile. They cannot be transposed so easily into the private lifeworlds of the students; they require a new form of organization, or they are fundamentally dependent on the classroom as a shared place. In the following subsections we will be looking more closely at these aspects of teaching, which are discussed in the interviews and observed in the online lessons, to identify the specific function of the classroom as a place.

#### *Absence in the classroom*

One of the absolute fundamentals of school-based teaching—and this becomes noticeable in the situation of school closures—is that students can come together as members of a learning group. This meeting in the classroom is the prerequisite for establishing any sense of belonging to a group. This process is based, in part, on a common, shared work rhythm:

so then they'd realize after the weeks well it's boring at home, I don't meet anyone, I don't have anyone to talk to (.) and at school, of course, I sometimes have to sit still for an hour (1) but there's such a nice well-regulated way of being between tension and relaxation, there's something happening, there are other people.

(TL, principal of an elementary school)

This co-presence in the classroom is certainly not always free of friction and is also marked by conflicts and exclusions. But for everyday teaching practice, the direct (both unavoidable and self-evident) mutual referencing between the members of a learning group is constitutive:

in the end, it really is (3) the access to the children (.) it's the same for the children (.) the self-relativization (.) for example oh he's already finished or (.) they can't see that, even putting their hands up is difficult

(GBV, second-grade teacher)

The teacher who is speaking here does offer online teaching, but misses being able to observe the children directly (“access”). She notes that it is also important for the children to see each other working, and that this can serve as a stimulus. Even the practice of raising one’s hand or otherwise attracting the teacher’s attention—the usual way of organizing talk in a large learning group about a common subject (Mehan, 1979; Wenzl, 2014)—proves “difficult” in online lessons. This calls into question the conversational space as a public and shared space. But remote teaching, according to our interviewees, imposes even greater restrictions on didactic access. One teacher says, for example:

Well, especially in spring, observing the germination of a runner bean, that classic exercise. Or observing early spring flowers, well everything, where some of the children don’t have access to it at all, at home. That, that’s not possible now.

(SL, principal and teacher for mathematics, German and music)

Primary school teaching, the interviewees point out, is not just about working through tasks from the textbook, but also about constructing educational scenes, which require a common place. It may be surprising that germinating a runner bean would not be possible at home, but the argument is ultimate that not everyone has direct—or adequate—access to this form of “learning through discovery”. In another interview, the teacher uses metaphors to define the holistic nature of classroom teaching:

When I’m going for a walk in the forest, then I go through a forest and I somehow have to smell the forest and see the forest. I think it’s the same for teaching. I can’t do it all over the phone and via paper. ... there are a lot of apps, that’s what’s in store for us now. But I can already tell that that isn’t the panacea, it won’t stop us from going for a walk in the forest or sitting down in a meadow and really looking at a dandelion.

(IO, class teacher of a first class)

A walk in the woods may be a surprising metaphor for school-based lessons, but it does express the sensory nature of the experience of teaching and learning. In a situation where classrooms are closed, it becomes clear that these are not solely places of collective learning but are also (or can be) places of sensory learning. Also, learning excursions, e.g., walks in the forest, have the classroom as their starting point. Interestingly, this comment highlights the indispensable role of the classroom as a common place of learning—precisely for those forms of learning that transcend a narrow understanding of “school-based” learning as the processing of tasks.

The processing of tasks in remote or online teaching offers few opportunities for diagnostic observation and adaptive management. One teacher talks about what classroom supervision means, in her experience:



Seeing why the student doesn't get it, seeing where he's going wrong and (.) motivating him and encouraging him to keep practicing. That's what I miss now and the opportunity for targeted differentiation, which you can only carry out in a meaningful way if you can directly see and observe the student and you can tell, from his whole body language, when it's getting difficult. He breathes more heavily or gets slower or says um or nothing at all or just stares into space. This feedback, from the non-verbal area, it's just all missing.

(SL, principal and teacher for mathematics, German, and music)

Intensive observation of students, including their physical movements, and the attempt to give targeted motivation or discipline go hand in hand and are interdependent. This form of multidimensional "access", where pedagogy and didactics are virtually inseparable, can only be achieved in conditions of direct physical co-presence, and cannot be replaced by synchronous online teaching.

It becomes clear from these interview extracts that learning on a common object requires physical presence and participation in a common didactic setting (in the same place). This in turn allows (comprehensive) observation, based on which learning processes can be adaptively regulated. On the one hand, this makes participation in the lesson inescapable, since it is not possible to withdraw from the setting, physically at least. On the other hand, it ensures that something is binding in the organization of the interaction, e.g., the certainty that the students are participating and have the opportunity to interact by way of physical co-presence. This, as we will show in the following subsection, is not always a given in online teaching.

### *Presence(s) in online teaching*

One teacher offers daily online teaching in the form of a videoconference and allowed us to carry out participant observation. The main characteristic of these lessons is that they transpose quite traditional patterns of teaching into a digital format. The monitor shows those children who have a camera switched on; for the others, only the name is visible. At the beginning, only a few are there, but after about ten minutes, most of the class is present. In the list of participants, two are marked "no response", and three have been asked to register but do not appear to have done so.<sup>4</sup> After some initial commotion, the teacher's greeting (to which the class responds more or less in unison), and repeated requests for everyone to turn off their microphones, the teacher begins the German lesson, which starts with a dictation task every morning. The students are then asked to look up the words she has dictated in the German dictionary, check them, and make a note of the page each word is on.

The teacher then begins to dictate the sentence "Wir schwimmen" [we swim]. "The second word we'll be writing: Tor [gate]. [3] Tor". "Mrs. T. I can't keep up" calls a child. "Start by writing Tor" says a voice from

the same direction (sounds like an adult, parent?). “Please always say your name, otherwise, I don’t know who’s talking to me”. Then she repeats both words.

(MT, third-grade teacher)

This short scene reveals two interesting aspects of this online lesson. Firstly, the teacher cannot see who has finished writing, so the children have to give a verbal indication if they need more time. When they speak, the children are expected to say their names first, so the teacher knows to which child the voice belongs. It must be made clear who is saying something or asking a question. Something that is immediately discernible in the classroom needs to be announced in the digital space. Why is it so essential to attribute utterances to individuals? Clearly, it is not just about the processing of the subject matter, e.g., in the form of correct answers; at the same time, it is always about being able to address individuals. With regard to the inclusion or exclusion of students, we can note that the linking of speech acts to specific children, which seems unproblematic and is taken for granted in face-to-face teaching, is not at all straightforward here.

The second aspect of online teaching is that participation is opened up to other people who are not part of the learning group. Several times the observation record describes voices from behind the scenes, which either create background noise (e.g. “sounds of small children”) or monitor what is happening behind the screen, such as the adult voice mentioned here and in the following extract.

After all the words have been dictated, the children are expected to write down the page numbers in the dictionary on which each word is found. Once they have looked up all the words, they are supposed to report back. The teacher times how long they have taken, and each student notes his or her time. Gradually, more and more children say they have “finished”—not always stating their name:

“Please say your name first, otherwise, I can’t tell who’s speaking”. Then sounds of small children are heard again in the background. Suddenly an adult voice speaks, somewhat harshly: “Good morning. This is Benjamin’s mum. I think it’s very distracting for the other children who are still looking for the words if there’s always someone calling out. It really discourages children like Benjamin [groaning/snorting laughter]”. “OK, please turn off your microphones then” says Mrs. T. in response. “Thank you” says the mother very firmly. “You’re welcome” replies Mrs. T. in an equally strong voice.

(MT, third-grade teacher)

What becomes especially clear in this scene is the precarity of the presence of parents, who are mainly focused on the needs of their own children. The mother who is present here complains about the disturbance and demotivation that the dictionary competition causes her son, thereby criticizing the

online didactic arrangement. The teacher responds by changing the modus and isolating the individual workstations acoustically by (once again) asking the children to switch off their microphones. It remains unclear how they are now meant to let the teacher know that they have completed the task. Shortly afterward, she ends the time assigned to the task earlier than planned and begins the comparison of the page numbers. Thus, online teaching allows a digital co-presence of additional actors, who become witnesses to and sometimes critics of what is happening in the lesson. The mother's verbal criticism leads to immediate regulation and ultimately the termination of the competition.

The social arrangement presented here is almost always the plenum (with short phases of individual work). Here learning means answering the teacher's questions and thereby supposedly producing a collective understanding of meaning; it is assumed (as in the classroom discourse) that even those students who are not actively participating are "following" the teacher's discourse. Here, however, everyone is more or less forced to participate in things that can be dealt with dyadically in face-to-face teaching (e.g., help or repetition for individual students). This means that in this online version of teaching, where everything plays out on a single channel, everyone can hear when individuals articulate problems. On the other hand, this can also allow problems to be dealt with collectively (we observe how fellow students answer questions that have been addressed to the teacher).

#### *"Individualized" at last?*

Even in "normal conditions", primary school teaching seems to consist mainly of the processing of tasks by students. Teaching that follows the maxims of "individualization" is particularly inclined to establish task processing as its core (Breidenstein, 2023; Breidenstein & Rademacher, 2017; Carlgren et al., 2006; Martens, 2018). While a fundamental focus on tasks in (primary school) teaching can be supplemented, when schools are operating normally, by more discursive, open, and collective approaches to the subject matter, remote teaching seems to be largely reduced or narrowed to the processing of tasks. This particular reduction, however, is barely mentioned explicitly in the interviews; instead, it happens covertly. For most of our interviewees, it seems to be self-evident that remote teaching must be organized around the processing of tasks in the home environment.

While nearly all of our interviewees lament the closure of schools and see the attempts to replace the classroom, as described earlier, as a fundamental loss, we were surprised to find two teachers in our sample who see the school closures as an opportunity. Both explicitly view their work as a progressive educational project and see the conditions of lockdown as favorable to this project.

Our progressive education (Reformpädagogik) really played into our hands and made things (.) really easy for us, because our students are used to working in that way. We have virtually no front-of-class teaching.

We just have, once a week, an English input phase, a German input phase and a (.) mathematics input phase. ... And then they get learning tasks anyway, and they schedule these learning tasks into their school day.

(AK, headteacher in the primary and secondary level of a progressive teaching school)

This school principal sees his progressive educational ambitions as confirmed by the COVID crisis and the closure of schools. This closure does not constitute such a major rupture in relation to a teaching routine centered on the independent processing of “learning tasks”. The planning and processing of these tasks do not require the physical presence of the students, it seems not to be tied to a specific place, and it can, according to the principal’s presentation, take place at home without difficulty.

A teacher from another school with a progressive educational orientation also refers to her students’ experience of independent task processing. This experience, she suggests, is now proving its worth:

in German and mathematics the children are used to working relatively independently anyway, and many children from these mixed-age groups and also in my year two class (.) did a lot of work because in my view it’s very well explained it’s well structured, the children (.) find similar task formats again and again and can work through them independently, and (.) many children (.) have done that.

...

we observe that the children who (.) have learned this way in our mixed-age learning groups, so who have always had very individualized teaching at primary school, that they sit down of their own accord (.) and work in their exercise books, they just want to carry on for two or three pages.

(TL, principal of an elementary school)

Teaching that sees its main function primarily as the setting of tasks for individual processing can therefore potentially dispense with the classroom as a place, and with physical presence at school. Or, in any case, it can do so if children already have experience with this kind of teaching and therefore “sit down of their own accord”. This means, however, that this kind of teaching excludes those children who may need more intensive support or supervision when processing tasks, as discussed earlier.

Furthermore, the social dimension of teaching and learning seems to play no part in this version of individualization. When the interviewer asks whether the children would miss each other, the principal of the progressive school replies:

Yes, that is actually something parents are complaining to teachers about more and more, which I find very interesting. That we don’t always bring

everyone together via Zoom conferences, and we really don't see that as our job, because/even when the children are here at school, there are enough people in the group that they don't like at all. They don't want to do anything with them, and at break time they have their cliques that they're with. They don't stand around with 23 [children]. And then we said, very clearly: quite honestly with all the media that exist today, the parents can arrange that themselves.

(AK, headteacher in the primary and secondary level of a progressive teaching school)

This school does not feel responsible for the social contact between the children—at least, not during the crisis. This task is handed over to the private sphere. The rationale—that the children are not all friends with each other anyway—is interesting. It is undoubtedly true but fails to acknowledge that the social dimension of teaching is not (primarily) about forming friendships, but about joint learning with children who have *not* sought each other out, and who (must) nonetheless get along. As we know, social life in the classroom is by no means free of exclusion, and for some individuals, it can be characterized by the experience of bullying (Adler & Adler, 1998). On the other hand, however, allocation to a school class is something that does not have to be earned and which cannot be disputed. Thus, students can belong to a learning group simply by virtue of their organizational membership. This is probably one dimension of inclusion that is often overlooked and underestimated when schools are operating normally.

### **Conclusion: The classroom as a place**

We will finish by summarizing how our interviewees experienced and described the situation of school closure and examining these experiences and descriptions from the perspective of spatial theory. Classrooms as physical, built spaces were closed, but teaching was expected to continue in decentralized form, in the students' homes. To separate school-based teaching from its spatial basis, the classroom, the first requirement was to transport the materials (textbooks, worksheets, etc.) into the home environment of the students, either physically (dropping material off, picking it up, or sending it by post) or digitally (sharing material to be downloaded or emailing it). At the same time, for most of our interviewees, teaching had to dispense with any direct presentation, motivation, supervision, and management by the teacher. So, on the one hand, it was necessary to rely on the students' independence and "self-regulation", and on the other hand, it was hoped that parents would provide support, motivation, and monitoring. Only 2 of the 15 teachers we interviewed conducted synchronous online teaching; in both cases, their main concern was to be able to use video meetings to transpose parts of their role in guiding and managing student activities into the online format.

The “digital classroom”, however, presents many pitfalls: while the video tool offers a shared space in which pedagogical activity can be carried out, the interaction is also shaped by the students’ simultaneous presence in different spaces, with other people (parents, siblings, dolls). Of course, the physical classroom is also characterized by a multitude of overlapping spatialities, e.g., visual, acoustic, and haptic spaces, which are in a sense organized independently (Breidenstein, 2004). This diversity of spaces similarly calls into question the fiction of “joint” teaching and learning. However, the bodily presence of the students in the same place limits and structures these spatialities and relates them to each other. The “front-stage” and “back-stage” (Zinnecker, 1978) also remain interconnected in the physical classroom, not least by being protected from each other. In the digital classroom, in contrast, the different spatial dimensions seem largely disconnected, and the interplay between front- and back-stage takes on new forms (Laube, 2016): it is possible to separate acoustic spaces by switching off the microphone, and if the camera is turned off, then the visual space is also separated. In other words, there is such a thing as digital “co-presence”, but the conditions of interaction are fundamentally altered and the format of the presence(s) is different. Since this co-presence is mediated by technology and the participants are physically in different places at the same time, the reference to a common topic is possible, but has little binding force and is constantly under threat.

Most of our interviewees see online teaching as unpromising, for various reasons. On the one hand, they assume it will not enable them to reach all the members of the learning group (as confirmed by the experience of those who attempt it); on the other hand, they believe that direct observation and supervision of students’ activities, which they see as important, is achievable only in conditions of joint physical co-presence in the same place. They describe vividly how pedagogical diagnosis and intervention rely on the perception of moods and the detailed observation of students, including their physical movements. They present an “ecological” view (Doyle, 2006) of classroom management, one could say. They do see it as possible, during the school closures, to shift certain teaching and learning practices—such as the processing of tasks—into the home environment. But they also argue that this reduces their ability to influence and manage what the students are actually doing.

Apart from the obvious limitations on the opportunities for pedagogical (inter)action, remote teaching also entails didactic imbalances, according to our interviewees. Moving teaching into the students’ own homes generally means reducing it to the processing of tasks and exercises. Online tools and learning apps are particularly likely to operate with closed tasks that have clear solutions, where attempted answers can automatically be marked as correct or incorrect. Forms of school-based teaching that strive for a more comprehensive and open-ended engagement with the subject matter seem to be dependent on a shared place. Thus, the classroom is the starting point for learning on a common object: even “learning excursions”—e.g., to a meadow of dandelions—begin and end in the classroom.

When it comes to aspirations to school inclusion, i.e., the effort to facilitate participation in a joint practice, the first thing to be noted is that several empirical studies on school-based education in the COVID crisis indicate that many children and adolescents hardly participate in remote learning or do not do so at all, because the online teaching offered by schools does not reach them (Huber et al., 2020). This is also confirmed by nearly all our interviewees. Some students are quite literally left behind. One implication of this finding is that there needs to be an improvement in the provision of (adequate) internet connections and mobile devices to students (Huber et al., 2020). However, the experience of school closures in the pandemic can also encourage us to think about inclusion on a more fundamental level. Classroom teaching, as reflected in most of our interviews, appears to be indispensable as the *social* basis for children's academic learning, in two respects. On the one hand, the mandatory physical presence of all members of the learning group in a common place creates the opportunity to participate in something that is shared (Merl & Idel, 2020; Wenzl, 2014). On the other hand, it is only when children are separated from their families that the exclusivity of school-based learning can be guaranteed. It became clear in our observation of the synchronous online teaching that the students' spatial isolation allows only a limited degree of joint action.

What becomes apparent, besides the fundamental spatial constitution of school, is the importance of the physical co-presence of students in one (specific) place. Löw (2001) conceives place as “concretely nameable and unique”; this intensifies the “symbolic effect of places” (p. 199, own translation). Classrooms become places when they are allocated to a specific learning group for the purpose of teaching, equipped for this purpose and identified as such in social practice. Thus, the repeated physical presence of students produces the (symbolic) function of the school as a spatial institution in general, and at the same time, the classroom as a singular place. It is precisely this physical co-presence that prefigures participation in practices of teaching and learning, which are composed of specific material arrangements (the bodies of teachers and learners, artifacts/things) and “doings and sayings” (Schatzki, 2012). So, we can conclude that a classroom is a place that fundamentally, through physical co-presence, allows participation in practices of teaching and learning.

Schmidt (2012) discusses physical co-presence in the material arrangement of the classroom as an exclusive co-presence that isolates teaching and learning practices from the “interference of the social process” (p. 64, own translation). The exclusive co-presence of the children in a learning group can therefore simultaneously be understood as the basis for all attempts to make teaching inclusive (Rißler & Budde, 2017). We are not claiming that primary schools, when operating “normally”, completely achieve an inclusive practice—the socio-spatial segregation of student bodies is too obvious for that, and the separation of students with “special educational needs” is too well established. But at least we can say that those students who are put together as a learning group

by the school share a classroom. In a fundamental sense, preceding all pedagogy and didactics, the students are reliant on each other and connected through their physical co-presence. They take part in the “interaction order” (Goffman, 1983) of the classroom, which means that they notice each other and take into account that they notice each other (Vanderstraeten, 2004). This tells us nothing about the didactic practice, i.e., whether and how members of the learning group are actually addressed in their diversity. Furthermore, the focus on equality tends to contradict the idea that inclusion simultaneously allows both difference and participation (Bossen & Merl, 2021). Nonetheless, physical presence in a shared place is certainly one of the conditions for the possibility of pedagogical practices that are meant to be inclusive.

## Notes

- 1 We use the term “online teaching” to describe synchronous teaching via videoconference, while “remote teaching” involves learning at home with asynchronous supervision by the teacher.
- 2 One possible way to ensure that the spatial conditions of teaching are not viewed as self-evident, and to make them an object of reflection, is to distance oneself historiographically from contemporary ideas and retrace a genealogy of the schoolroom and classroom. Here it is worth noting the pioneering works of Göhlich (1993) and Jelich & Kemnitz (2003), who link the architectural history of school buildings to the development of pedagogical ideas.
- 3 Our thanks go to Anna Helms, Johanna Naumburger, and Anneli Schmidt for the transcriptions and their participation in the project.
- 4 In a later conversation we learn that “five parents” did not take part in the online teaching, either because they did not have the equipment or because they chose not to participate.

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# Afterword

## Some reflections at the close of the volume

*Georg Rißler, Andreas Köpfer, and Tobias Buchner*

### Where we came from

Books have one, presumably many, origin stories that could be told. The genesis of this book goes back a long way and, of course, is in line with the editors' constant interest in and scholarly engagement with spatial theory, inclusion, and the exploration of possible interconnections between the two. In retrospect, however, a defining moment for the conception of this volume was an inspiring symposium, "Space and Spatiality in the Context of Heterogeneity and Inclusion" at the Freiburg University of Education in 2017. Following this conference and the discussions that ensued, three main impressions remained. First, the category of space holds extremely exciting and gainful perspectives for research questions around inclusive education. Second, however, linking questions to space and inclusion presents itself as a still rather marginal phenomenon of (educational) research and, moreover, as a scattered and fragmented terrain. The potentials of the connection between spatial issues and inclusive education are far from being exhausted theoretically, analytically as well as empirically. Third, the contributions were characterized by a reference to a specific focus, the German-language debates, and hence were limited to the national context and tended to be intra-disciplinary. Research following these observations reinforced these impressions and eventually led to the idea and conceptualization of the volume, *Space, Education, and Inclusion*.

This title attempts to capture important aspects of the book and (hopefully) connects the threads that are to be brought together. We did not start with the claim of mapping intra-disciplinary-national debates on space and inclusive education, but we tried to set up the volume more broadly—quasi also under the claim of inclusion and diversity. Second, a focus should be placed on the hitherto-neglected connection of space with educational contexts that are themselves positioned in the claim of inclusion.

However, the stories of origin that can be told also include events. Central to this was the great response we received from the authors we approached, who supported us with their pledges for contributions to this project and maintained this support even under unforeseeable conditions. These unpredictable conditions, or rather the related event, was the COVID-19 pandemic

with all its effects. We were confronted with these in the middle of the implementation of the volume. These events certainly had many effects and facets in the professional and private context globally, and certainly also many different effects and facets regionally and locally. However, it was precisely in the pandemic that the importance of space and spatiality in general, but also in particular for teaching and learning, for barriers, for access, inclusion, and exclusion processes, also in connection with our publication project, could be experienced directly. This event has thus once again opened our eyes to the fact that certain questions and perspectives were neglected and excluded in the planning of the volume. The spatial aspects of the pandemic for inclusive education, which were above all unmistakable, were certainly not adequately included in the volume. Therefore, we proactively made these perspectives part of this book and asked expert authors to partake. Hence, Andrea Bossen and Georg Breidenstein pick up this thread with a focus on spatial constructions within the first phase of pandemic-related school closures in Germany. Michelle Harrison also takes the pandemic as an example and explores open digital approaches to inclusive education. Thus, the pandemics sensitized us to the many exclusions we have made consciously and unconsciously and despite the inclusive claim. In this process, we were also sensitized again and insistently to the importance of spaces, spatial strategies, and spatial aspects not only in pandemic times (cf. Schatzki, 2022), but also in the everyday life of educational contexts.

We think that we have succeeded at least to some extent in meeting the claim of inclusion—on the one hand with interdisciplinarity, and on the other hand in the attempt to gather in one volume perspectives that have so far been rather invisible and neglected in the international discourse and thus to make them accessible. One example is the contribution by Amani Karisa, Benedict Khumalo, Joachim Nyoni, Kofi Nseibo, and Judith McKenzie, which critically examines the development of inclusive education in Africa from a spatial perspective. Also, Melanie Nind's contribution offers a novelty, the first analysis of the connection between inclusive research and space; and Andreas Köpfer's take on Siegfried Kracauer's contributions to the theory of space, which is only rarely mentioned within international discourse. In each specific way, then, all the contributions in this volume make an original and progressive contribution to linking space and inclusive education. The volume thus does not pursue the goal of sounding out one (!) theoretical perspective on space and spatiality. Rather, it attempts a broad spectrum to be spanned and brought together that also opens a view across disciplinary boundaries and opens the door at least a crack for a dialogue across these.

If one understands inclusion and exclusion as two sides of the same coin (Budde & Hummrich, 2015), then an inclusive claim necessarily remains connected with exclusion processes, a neglect and exclusion of perspectives and contexts. The question of how inclusions/exclusions have played out in the realization of the volume could certainly still be subject to critical reflection. Comparable to the now-well-known spatial representation of a transformation from an exclusive to an inclusive educational system, the present volume is also

a produced space that is accompanied by boundary making. Nevertheless, we believe that the contributions reflect an impressive range of theoretical and methodological approaches, questions, educational contexts, and perspectives. We would be pleased if the diversity of these contributions is taken up as an impulse for further debates and developments as well as for an exploration of perspectives and an interdisciplinary exchange.

The focus on educational contexts in the claim of inclusion, in turn, is due to an interesting, perhaps even surprising observation due to the inflationary talk of a cross-disciplinary “spatial turn” and a close interweaving of space with the debates of inclusive education. On the one hand, it is undeniable that space is inscribed in the discourses on inclusive education (Buchner & Köpfer, 2022). One could therefore assume that the repeatedly asserted diagnosis that the category of space has arrived in the list of categories of the social and cultural sciences also applies to the debates and discourses on inclusive education, or that the inscription of space in these debates is an expression of a spatial turn already. Especially since questions about space also have a long tradition in many subdisciplines of educational science—exemplarily, for example, in social pedagogy—on the one hand, and on the other hand, have increasingly and clearly left marks in recent years. The emergence of space and spatiality as a lemma in educational science handbooks, for example, can be interpreted as evidence of this. This increased attention is also reflected in anthologies and monographs, as well as conferences that place space at the center of theoretical debates and empirical analyses. Of course, also in pedagogies, space is often understood as a key aspect, e.g., of differentiated instruction and empowered learning settings (*ibid.*). A prominent commonplace here is the metaphor of space as a third educator. Likewise, practitioners are encouraged, for example, to create inclusive, low-barrier, and accessible learning environments—among other things, through an appropriate design and arrangement of material spaces.

The importance of space for inclusive education and inclusive education research is now also recognized in the context of inclusion research in educational science. However, a conjuncture of spatially contoured and, above all, theoretically and methodologically well-founded and collaborative discussion of space and spatial research in the context of inclusive education has so far failed to materialize. Although the pioneering publication by Hemingway and Armstrong (2012) sets out paths in the international discourse, we are currently still rather on the way “towards a spatial turn in inclusive education” (Waitoller & Annamma, 2017). The paths can certainly be trodden much further, and equally new ones can be created. While there are now scattered articles and special issues on space and inclusion (*cf.* Buchner & Köpfer, 2022; Köpfer & Reißler, 2017), these intensive discussions about spatial terms, spatial concepts, and their implications as well as an exploration of analytical possibilities in connection with inclusion and exclusion are still rather rare. Moreover, what has already been pointed out in other contexts also applies to the debates about space and inclusion: Often space remains a rather nebulous concept or an appendage that is applied without reflection (Hard, 2003).

### Where we are

So where do we currently stand in terms of spatial research on inclusive education? In a recent publication, Buchner and Köpfer (2022, pp. 2–5) present a systematization of existing research and try to bring order into the scattered terrain by distinguishing four strands of approaches to space and inclusive education in the international discourse:

- The first strand comprises statistical analyses which are conducted concerning the number of students labeled as having “special educational needs” (SEN) in each place of schooling.
- The second strand gathers research approaches which focus on segregating practices occurring under the surface structure of mainstream schools. Here, the relations between individual and contextual factors related to segregating as well as including practices are of particular interest.
- The third strand focuses on the relations between material place, social practices, and subjectivities in schools, referring to a relational understanding of space.
- The fourth strand expands the focus of empirical interrogation beyond the walls of schools and addresses the relations between schools and neighboring spaces, pointing to the importance of various categories of difference and their intersectional interplay.

On the one hand, this attempt at classification illustrates the diversity of perspectives and questions. But at the same time, it says little about the specific references to the spatial theories and concepts used—although the authors point out that a relational understanding of space seems to prevail and experience great research interest, while absolute models of space, models in which space is continuous and exists as an absolute entity independent from bodies and practices, tend to be rejected. Hence, there is still work to be done. Most of the contributions in our volume can be easily assigned to this systematization—e.g., the chapter by Tanja Sturm, Benjamin Wagener, and Monika Wagner Willi. Their approach combines aspects of Karl Mannheim’s praxeological sociology of knowledge with a relational understanding of space as suggested by Martina Löw and Erving Goffman’s micro-sociological territorial theory. Federico R. Waitoller’s contribution, which introduces the model of marketSpace to generate a profound understanding of the interrelation between market driven policies and choice of school, fits into this systematics developed. Also, the volume supports the thesis, that relational understandings of space dominate, e.g., as in Katie Scott Newhouse and Srikala Naraian’s text that examines the programmatic discourse around inclusive education and explores the production of space through restrictive educational programs. And Hanna Ragnarsdóttir develops a theoretical perspective that understands educational spaces primarily as a product of linguistic and culturally responsive educational practices.

## Where are we heading to?

In our opinion, this path of heterogenization of approaches, theoretically as well as methodologically, should be pursued further. As a reaction to the heterogeneous mixture of perspectives and derived from lines of criticism on the under-determinedness of the spatial turn, sociologist Schroer (2019) proposes a term with less ballast and that refers to a diversity of perspectives: “Space Studies”. Independent of a skepticism towards the diagnosis of a “spatial turn”, this term firstly considers the fundamental insight of a spatial constitution of the social. Secondly, it is suitable as a collective term for heterogeneous ideas of space and research objects. And thirdly, it focuses more on the scientific practice of spatial cultural research. We hope that this volume can be a contribution to such a direction and an evolving field of theoretically and empirically founded space studies in inclusive education.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to the authors who embarked on this project and contributed to the success of this volume with their perspectives. Finally, we would like to thank Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, for making our project possible and supporting it throughout the development process.

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