Editorial

Disabled People and the Intersectional Nature of Social Inclusion

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Abstract
This editorial introduces a thematic issue of *Social Inclusion* focusing on disabled people and the intersectional nature of social inclusion. This thematic issue includes transnational and transdisciplinary studies and expressions of lived experiences facing disabled people, their families, and allies across the globe from a social, human rights, and/or disability justice perspective. The articles comprising this issue include an explicit recognition and discussion of intertwined and socially constructed identities, labels, power, and privilege as explicated by pioneering Black feminists who introduced the concept of intersectionality. Taken together, the articles within this issue identify and articulate the powerful ideological forces and subsequent policies and practices working against transformational action. As such, we are not calling for the inclusion of disabled people into society as it is today—wrought with social, economic, and environmental crises. Rather, we seek a transformation of the status quo whereby disabled people are respected as an inherent part of human diversity with gifts and worthiness untangled from a capitalist and colonial system of exploitation, extraction, and oppression. This means that achieving social justice and inclusion requires radically reordering our economic and political systems. This thematic issue illuminates the impacts and root causes of exclusion to foment critical thinking about the possibilities for social inclusion from the perspective of those who are marginalized by the status quo.

Keywords
disability; disability justice; human rights; intersectionality; social model

1. Background

Disabled people comprise at least 16% of the world's population, 80% of whom live in the Global South (World Health Organization, 2023). They are integral parts of our families, communities, and cultures. Disabled people are a part of our human diversity but continue to face discrimination and exclusion in socio-economic, political, and cultural life. They are disproportionately represented among those living in poverty, which, when analysed in depth, is usually the result of discrimination, government failure, ineptitude, immorality, criminality, or exclusive policy.

The social model of disability envisages disablement as a social construction of systemic barriers, discriminatory attitudes, and exclusion. The social model represents a shift from individual medical assumptions about disability to an analysis of how society responds to impaired individuals and disables them from full participation. The model implies that impairments would not necessarily lead to disability if society were to accommodate and include disabled people. Indeed, most people acquire their impairments (to varying degrees and in different forms) through birth, poverty, environmental hazards, violence, accident, war, and ageing. This critical approach to disability issues has become internationally influential

and changed the way disabled people see themselves and organize for social change. This perspective also considers the multiple intersecting identities that people with disabilities hold, and forms of oppression related to their gender, sexuality, age, race/ethnicity, nationality, class/caste, or other characteristics.

As the social model has progressed over the past few decades, there has also been a rise in the profile of disability rights and disability justice. As a starting point, however, it is important to acknowledge that contemporary understandings and attitudes towards disability have been shaped by the onset of capitalism and its associated ideologies of individualism, liberal utilitarianism, industrialisation (specifically waged labour), and the medicalisation of social life. As a result, the injustice of disableism (in all its discriminatory forms) is endemic to most, if not all, contemporary societies.

In line with the principles of disability justice, we want to recognize and support the call to redress the historical erasure and invisiblized lives of disabled people of colour, immigrants with disabilities, disabled people who practice marginalized religions, queers with disabilities, trans and gender non-conforming disabled people, disabled people who are houseless, incarcerated, disabled people who have had their ancestral lands stolen, amongst others (Sins Invalid, 2020). In this way, the manuscripts in this issue include an explicit recognition and discussion of intertwined and socially constructed identities, labels, power, and privilege as explicated by pioneering Black feminists who introduced the concept of intersectionality. We understand intersectionality as a conceptual theory that traces its intellectual roots to the activist work of Black women, Indigenous women, and women from the Global South during the second wave of feminism (see, for example, Anzaldua, 1990; Hill-Collins, 1986; hooks, 1984; Jamieson, 1979; Lorde, 1984; Mohanty, 1984; Two-Axe Early, 1994).

From this perspective, this thematic issue is not calling for the inclusion of disabled people into society as it is today—wrought with social, economic, and environmental crises. Rather, we seek a transformation of the status quo whereby disabled people are respected as an inherent part of human diversity with gifts and worthiness that are not predicated on contributions to a capitalist and colonial system of exploitation, extraction, and oppression.

We believe this transformative change requires a collective response and collective action to address the multiple and intertwined social, economic, and environmental crises of our time. These crises include imminent ecological unraveling, gaping economic inequality, and surging white supremacy.

Transformative change requires wealthy nations of the Global North to take more responsibility for their contributions to the various crises we are experiencing and move away from individualist and nationalist ways of thinking and living—to act together as a global human community with equal respect for all other living beings. To do this, we can learn a great deal from indigenous ways of knowing and being. We can learn from the value of interdependence highlighted by disabled people. We can use the analytical tools of intersectionality as a crucial intervention because of its assertion that systemic and structural oppression can only be understood and rooted out "through an interrogation of the complex, intersecting, and overlapping ways in which power operates via the social axes of difference, namely race, class, gender, disability, age, sexuality, ethnicity, and nationality mediated by the exploitative and oppressive working of settler colonialism and transnational capitalism" (Erevelles & Morrow, 2023, p. 2). We can learn from all of those who are pushed to the margins of our societies through the inclusive design of transformative change that is anti-patriarchy, anti-capitalist, decolonial and anti-ableist.

2. About This Issue

This thematic issue includes transnational and transdisciplinary studies and expressions of lived experiences facing disabled people, their families, and allies across the globe from a social, human rights, and/or disability justice perspective. We chose these manuscripts to include a breadth of knowledge from various geographic and social locations and to advance knowledge on intersectionality in relation to disability to support the co-production of transdisciplinary knowledge, coalition building, and cross-movement organizing that transcends identity politics. Moreover, some of the manuscripts in this issue pertain to people with particular impairments (e.g., people with intellectual disabilities) and various other social identities in relation to gender, indigeneity, religion, etc., to highlight the need for recognition and inclusion of underrepresented groups in disability studies and the disability movement itself.

Accounts range from the lived experiences of climate change in Indonesia where Pirmasari and McQuaid (2023) articulate the intersections of disability with social and structural injustices that shape diverse responses to climate change and disasters. The authors highlight the challenges of cultural representations of climate disasters and disability to argue for the centring of *diffability* in disaster risk reduction decision-making.

With a focus on the inclusion of disabled women in Malawi, Huque (2023) captures the stories of grassroots women disability activists combatting their own and other's experiences of violence, abuse, and exclusion. Their stories highlight the politics and ethics of community care incorporating human rights discourse and the expression of agency, strength, and solidarity.

From an intersectional analysis of gender, disability, and religion in India, Thompson et al. (2023) show how disability remains the strongest category to determine the position of an individual in various social contexts. Their analysis of narrative interviews conducted among diverse persons with disabilities reveals that even though

gender and minority religious statuses are forceful categories that independently lead to social exclusion, disability is the root cause of discrimination.

In response to this discrimination and an international push for localization of human rights, Grech et al. (2023) critically examine the barriers to implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities in the Global South. Their study concludes that there is a profound need for an informed, contextualized, intersectional, and geopolitical analysis where poverty is kept sharply in focus and to avoid unrealistic assumptions about disability rights frameworks.

Turning toward the scientific community, Sanmiquel-Molinero et al. (2023) draw on a pragmatic discourse analysis of Latin American scientific literature to explore the models used and dominant ideas associated with disabled parenthood. They conclude that the scientific community must transcend the leading metaphor of disability vulnerability/risk and embrace the idea of "disability as interdependency."

Shifting to the Global North, Carvalhais et al. (2023) studied the implementation of person-centred planning (PCP) for persons with intellectual disabilities in Portugal. Their study found many discrepancies in the process caused by bureaucratic practices and habits, participation of families, as well as different understandings of the general mission and vision of PCP. The results imply that a lot of work is still needed to improve PCP practice and fully support the active citizenship of persons with intellectual disabilities.

Our issue concludes with Sépulchre's (2023) explorative study of the use of intersectional praxis in the provision of disability and accessibility resources in higher education in Sweden and the United States. Based on interviews with university administrative staff, the author analyses participants' conceptions of disability as well as—based on hypothetical scenarios—the implementation of disability anti-discrimination laws in both countries. This study finds it crucial to recognise disability as "diversity" from an intersectional perspective in order to realistically advance a social justice agenda in higher education.

Taken together, the manuscripts within this issue identify and articulate the powerful ideological forces and subsequent policies and practices working against transformational action. This means that achieving social justice and inclusion requires radically reordering our economic and political systems. This thematic issue illuminates the impacts and root causes of exclusion to foment critical thinking about the possibilities for social inclusion. Disabled people experience structural vulnerability, violence, and discrimination, often as a result of neoliberal exploitation, indiscriminate impoverishment, and exclusive service provision.

3. Dedication and Conclusion

This thematic issue is the result of *Social Inclusion*'s partnership with the research network (In)Justice International (II) of which the editors of this issue are a part. II is a not-for-profit multidisciplinary global collective accessible to all. Our aim is to uncover, expose, and publicise injustices/atrocities committed against the environment, indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, refugees, disabled people, the so-called "troublesome youth," and people from poorer class backgrounds. Injustices inflicted against gender "difference" is also an important consideration.

We dedicate this thematic issue to the founder of II, Dr. Simon Prideaux. Simon was an associate professor at the University of Leeds, UK. Over the course of his career, he wrote widely in the fields of social policy, sociology, disability studies, and crime with a particular interest in comparative access policy, welfare discourses, conditionality, and political ideologies. Before his death in 2023, Simon founded II to bring together established and emerging leaders from separate disciplines to work in complementarity with one another to explain and address the reasons why—whether it be good or bad—society and/or the economic environment has come to be in the condition that it is. Genocide, war, class, gender, social exclusion, (institutional) discrimination and racism, migration, (social) media influence, and public perception/actions are prominent aspects of our dissemination process in a dedicated opposition to (anti-)social injustice.

Simon Prideaux was hard-working, precise, and very persistent in his efforts to expand the II network and include scholars throughout the world to work for the cause, and to cover a variety of disciplines to tackle any issue of injustice. He was also a cheerful colleague and made one laugh with his wry humour. Despite of all his scholarly merits, he did not make a fuss about them. Once or twice, we heard him describe his own position as "a knower of all, master of none." Simon's contagious positive attitude was a breath of fresh air in difficult times. His generous availability, care, engagement, intellectual stimulus, and critique inspired us to continue. We miss Simon very much.

This thematic issue furthers the vision of II which is to demonstrate how theoretical knowledge helps in the understanding of why social and public policies and directions are embarked upon and their impacts on diverse disabled people. The use of factual and statistical data and other forms of research and knowledge underlines the influences and consequences of such policy-making. Indeed, with this theoretical knowledge and so-called factual reinforcement, it is then possible to devise a solution to destructive/oppressive circumstances when possible and necessary. Historical analysis and theory in conjunction with knowledge of economic socio-political conditions, influences, and outcomes also enhances understanding and, with this combination of theory and information (historical or contemporary), a more critical, wide-ranging approach can be taken toward social, environmental, and economic justice that is accessible and inclusive of all people.

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