
Citizenship in action: Swedish disabled people claim 'Full Participation. Now'

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Abstract

In his lecture about Citizenship and Social Class, T.H. Marshall noted that 'societies in which citizenship is a developing institution create an image of an ideal citizenship against which achievement can be measured and towards which aspiration can be directed'. The ideal of citizenship is not neutral, however, and various feminist scholars have called attention to the fact that citizenship tends to be tailored to the situation of able-bodied, adult, heterosexual and full-time employed males. As a consequence, people who do not fit this template risk finding themselves in a position of 'second class citizens'.

This paper investigates how citizenship is continuously being imagined, reworked and negotiated in different societal arenas and how people claim their right to participate in society and to be recognised as valuable members of their society. The study focuses on the case of disabled people in Sweden claiming their right to full citizenship.

The empirical analysis is grounded on an online blog called 'Full Participation. Now' which was created five months prior to the 2010 general elections in Sweden. The blog's aim was to get the politicians' attention to the issue of full citizenship for persons with disabilities and the analysis shows how citizenship for disabled people is being (re-)imagined by bloggers who point at discriminatory practices at political, community and personal level. The analysis also shows how citizenship is negotiated by the bloggers who imagine citizenship in various – and sometimes contradictory – ways. Finally, the analysis indicates that the ideal of citizenship found in the blog posts not only develops in relation to the political arena but also in relation to everyday activities and experiences.

Keywords: disability, citizenship, Sweden, blog, participation, rights

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