

### Book review: Sine Agergaard: Rethinking sports and integration: developing a transnational perspective on migrants and descendants in sports

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*Book Review*

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**Sine Agergaard. *Rethinking sports and integration. Developing a Transnational Perspective on Migrants and Descendants in Sports.***

**Abindon and New York: Routledge,  
2018, ISBN: 978-1-138-29062-4 (hbk)**

Sine Agergaard, the author of “Rethinking sports and integration. Developing a Transnational Perspective on Migrants and Descendants in Sports”, is well known for her work in researches of migration, integration and social participation, especially in and by sport. In her previous researches she had used sport-based perspective to examine how migrants had integrated within hosting society, in what ways relations between newcomers, local communities and state institutions were established, and what were the social processes of migration with special focus on professionals as an actors and objects of these phenomena (Agergaard and Tiesler 2014; Agergaard et al. 2018; Agergaard 2017; Agergaard and Botelho 2014; Agergaard and la Cour 2012). She is also the co-founder and currently head of the International Network for research in Sport and Migration Issues. (spomi-net) In the mentioned works, Agergaard used different approaches and methods to examine both particular cases (like a problem of women professionals’ integration, ethnic minority into the field of Danish football) and transnational relations. Problems researched by the author refer to broader mosaic of interests tied up by the question: “How one can establish perspective on locally occurring but internationally connected migration-related phenomena in field of sport?” Summary of work (books and articles) establish Agergaard’s position as an expert in the field of migration and sport.

The reviewed book *Rethinking sports and integration. Developing a Transnational Perspective on Migrants and Descendants in Sports* is divided into eight chapters. After short introduction in which the author writes about objectives, key concepts and perspectives, cases used in the book and content of next parts,

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she moves forward to description of main theoretical frame – understanding integration in regard to other popular concepts used in description of migration as a process of constructing relations between migrants and hosting society. It must be highlighted that this introduction concentrates on argumentation that integration is a key concept in the author's work. She chooses it rather than mere inclusion, and this approach is well supported in the book. (see chapter 2, especially paragraph constructed around reconceptualizing of understanding the integration concept)

Third chapter of the book concentrates on presentation of policies implemented in some of European countries in the field of sport-related integration of migrants and their descendants. First, the author describes broader perspective of migration problem and role of Europe as centre of migrants' movement. One can read about shortcomings of multiculturalist policies adopted especially in Netherlands and Germany and, in fact, about crucial change in European Union's *modus operandi* which, especially after the economic crisis, is more federation of competing states than united politically, socially and economically body. In this landscape the author tries to find place for integration policies based on sports.

Next chapter refers to implementation of concrete policies in severe European countries. Author examines how campaigns concentrated on increasing participation in sport among migrants and descendants (focus here is set on Muslim girls and women). She pointed that quantified data were used to describe main problematic groups. The author argues as well that “future research and policy could change attention not only to the problem of increasing sports participation in itself but also to wider options for migrants and descendants to engage in and take pleasure from it (...).” (Agergaard 2018: 54)

Chapters 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> are constructed around concrete cases in which author explores how particular programmes are built, what methods of organisation and measurement are applied and what are the results of run ethnic minority sports clubs and ethnically mixed sports clubs. In 6<sup>th</sup> chapter Agergaard uses concept of social capital proposed by Robert Putnam (2001) to examine detailly how two kinds of social capital (bonding and bridging) can be applied to describe functions and impact of ethnic minority sports clubs and ethnic mixed sports clubs. It is done with use of numerous examples of adapting Putnam's theories in research and ends with several critiques about it.

Last part of the book is oriented on describing “perspectives” one can find in field of application of diversity management in sports-related integration policies. Again, the author refers to concrete cases discussing different approaches of politicians and managers. In the closure one will find original idea of sports-related integration proposed and described by Agergaard in relation to “sports-related integration initiatives.”

Although, the issues discussed in the book are complicated, the text is engaging. Especially the parts that concentrated on the analysis of the case studies, the results of which the author tries to connect with a broader perspective. Read-

er can find interesting results of comparisons between nation states and programmes that were implemented in local societies and communities. Despite the shortness of the text— the book is only 109 pages (and the rest is fulfilled by the index), and it is full of very intense argumentation. The length can be also seen as some kind of disadvantage – original author’s perspective in some parts is dominated by enumeration of research and citation of other scientists.

The book is based on the idea of collecting numerous of research and works about migration and sports to broad the perspective in which author can summarize the findings and argue on best ways of managing processes of integration. Logic of the reasoning is clear. Structure of the book is well organized. Agergaard presents material in an understandable and concise manner.

In my opinion, the main advantage of this book is the combination of theoretical argumentations (especially in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> chapter) with variety of research perspectives. In the effect, the author can present findings from more practical perspective. Thank to that the book is well balanced between theory and practice. For researchers who works in field of sports and migration and would like to expand their perspective and literature knowledge, Agergaard’s work would be exceptional asset. It could be an interesting asset also for practitioners and public.

However, one may wonder why the author has chosen to call the book with reference to “transnational perspective” although in the introduction and in the following paragraphs she concentrates only on North-Western European countries and – from perspective of most mentioned social groups or categories – on Muslims. Other migrants’ communities (and nation-based perspectives) shows up in the book but imbalance in presenting the cases and argumentation is striking and vivid.

The author argues why she concentrates on the North of Europe. The reasons are the differences in the level of development of integration policies, especially with the use of sports-based programmes and lack of research. However, it would be better if the author tried to diverse her perspective in more sophisticated way, especially when the book is trying to use transnational frame. In other words, experience of countries from other parts of Europe, e.g. Poland, Romania or Czechia is different even when it comes to basic aspects like directions of migration. Are these societies are experiencing rather immigration or emigration? In example, countries bordering with Ukraine (i.e. Poland) are facing increasing numbers of migration flow from this direction in last years. As they are found as destination countries, it would be interesting to compare their policies with those, which were and are implemented in Denmark, Switzerland or Netherlands.

From the other side, the author does not mention what we can say about experiences of Eastern Europeans migrating to the “old” European Union. It is likely that these communities were not researched into sports-based perspective or there are no sports-founded programmes of integration designed toward those groups. Anyway, even a short reference would subtle the author’s argumentation.

Sine Agergaard's *Rethinking sports and integration. Developing a Transnational Perspective on Migrants and Descendants in Sports*, is worth recommending lecture to anyone who wants to explore complicated relations between migration and sports. Besides minor critique, referring mostly to domination of North European perspective and treating as crucial researching frame experiences of implantation programmes oriented on integration of Muslims, it can be said that the author did an excellent work.

Query of available literature on sports-based integration programmes is very comprehensive. The book is well organized, and balance between theoretical considerations and practical exemplification is preserved. Especially, one who could be interested here are not only scientists but practitioners (i.e. managers of sports clubs, politicians, administrators, journalists) of migration. Critical approach used by the author fund basis for productive application of contained knowledge.

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