

Is Competitive Sport One of the Last Bastions Excluding Persons with Disabilities?

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In most social fields like education, employment, leisure, culture, etc. our democratic societies make great efforts in order to include people with disabilities. More than 170 states in the world have already signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, an international human rights treaty adopted in 2006 by the United Nations General Assembly intending to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities and guaranteeing their social inclusion. However, there is one domain in our life, where segregation of people seems to be taken for granted: it is competitive sport.

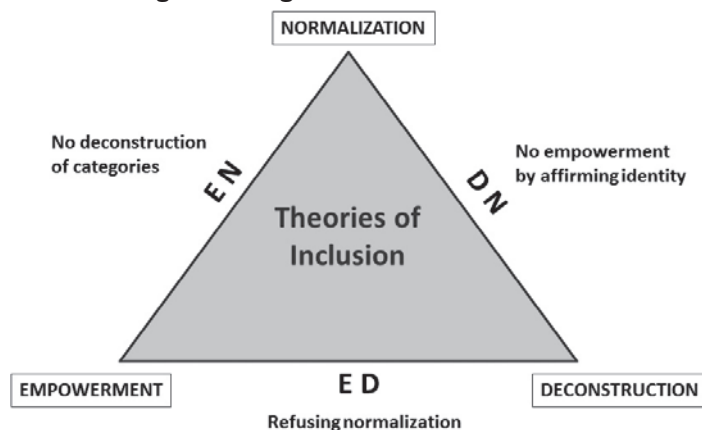
Of course, there exist a lot of activities, engagements, and projects in order to include persons with disabilities within sports and physical activities; however, if we have a closer look at these undertakings we realize that these efforts of inclusion are more or less limited to recreational sports, physical education or sports for all. At the high level, there is in general a clear distinction between and classification into *able-bodied sport* and *disabled sport*. The most prominent example of this classification is the division between Olympic and Paralympic Games. The strict binary categorization and segregation of these events can be considered as a marginalization or even as an exclusion of athletes with disabilities. Could you imagine museums reserved for art from able-bodied artists and others for art solely produced by disabled artists? Or an Oscar award for actors with and another one for actors without disability?

The objective of the following reflection is to examine the question why high level sport is so reluctant when it comes to the inclusion of people with disabilities. I will scrutinize the underlying reasons of the segregation between the Olympics and the Paralympics and make some thought provoking proposals concerning the inclusion of athletes with disabilities into mainstream sports at high level.

Inclusion

Inclusion is a complex and polysemic notion; depending on the context, it can take on different forms (Ekins 2016). It is foremost a political concept. Different political strategies and theories fighting against discrimination of minority groups carry this term on their banner. In today's theories concerning the inclusion of minorities we can distinguish roughly between three different policies, which are empowerment, normalization and deconstruction. As claiming the combination of all these three political concepts would end up in a trilemma, one of them has to be sacrificed when deciding about the political road-map (Boger, 2017). That's why minorities activists aim at either empowerment by normalization (EN; declining deconstruction) or normalization by deconstruction (ED; abandoning empowerment) or empowerment by deconstruction (ED; refusing normalization; s. Fig. 1). The suitability of the different approaches depends on context and political purpose.

Fig. 1: Strategies of Inclusion: a Trilemma



Cf. Boger 2017

After presenting different approaches and forms of inclusion in sports, taking for example the history of the relationship between the Olympic and Paralympic movement, I will argue in favor of an approach, which in the context of elite sport is in my opinion the most suitable to realize inclusion of athletes with disabilities and to avoid segregation.

Competition versus inclusion

The above mentioned UN-Convention claims to enable persons with disabilities “to participate on an equal basis with others in recreational, leisure and sporting activities” and explicitly asks “to encourage and promote the participation, to the fullest extent possible, of persons with disabilities in mainstream sporting activities at all levels” (UN 2006, art. 30 a), which includes competitive sport at the highest level.

However, in the world of high level sport these demands seem to remain unheard. Competitive sport can be considered as a sort of social Darwinism in the arena: the survival of the fittest, of the strongest, of the most able and most skillful in the different sports. There is no place for the disabled, for those who do not fit the exigencies of sport competition. The logic of competitive sport is classification and ranking according to abilities in order to select and reward the very best. The main ideology of competitive sport is ableism, a prejudice that, like racism, “encompasses more than just personal attitudes” (Barnes 2016, 5), that refers to “the sentiment of certain social groups and social structures that value and promote certain abilities, for example, productivity and competitiveness, over others, such as empathy, compassion and kindness” (Wolbring 2008, 253). The concept of inclusion in contrast respects and values diversity avoiding classification and ranking. Inclusion asserts the diversity of human beings and makes sure that this diversity is taken into consideration and respected at every level of human activities.

Considering these contradictions between the structural goals of high level sport and the objectives of inclusion, it is understandable that competitive sport is one of the last bastions against inclusion. There have been different attempts to take this bastion, some rare were successful, some are controversial and still vividly discussed.

Inclusive efforts of the Paralympic movement

At its origin Paralympic sport was considered to be a means of therapy and of rehabilitation. During the 1960s, in the context of the growing emancipation of people with disabilities this medical paradigm shifted slowly towards a sport oriented model with a strong focus on competition. During these times, integration into able-bodied

sport in general and into the Olympics in particular became one of the principal aims of this movement (cf. Hansen & Mcpherson 1994; Labanowich 1988).

After long negotiations with the International Olympic Committee (IOC), a 1500m men's and a 800m women's wheelchair racing event was included in the athletics program of the 1984 Los Angeles Summer Games and events in Alpine and Nordic skiing (1988 only) for athletes with disabilities were also held at the Winter Olympics 1984 in Sarajevo and 1988 in Calgary. Indeed, the wheelchair racing events were part of the Olympic program as so called demonstration sports until the 2004 Games in Athens (Schantz & Gilbert 2012; Legg et al. 2009). Efforts to gain full Olympic medal status for these events failed.

In 1990 the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) formed an International Committee on Integration of Disabled Athletes that later was renamed Commission for the Inclusion of Athletes with Disabilities. This commission, under the leadership of the former Paralympian Rick Hansen, tried to find solutions to include disabled sports into the Olympics and the mainstream sport movement. Different proposals to foster inclusion or integration of athletes with disabilities in the Olympic Games were presented. For example:

- Inclusion of the total Paralympic program in the Olympic program
- Inclusion of some disabled sport disciplines with full medal status
- Including every 4 years alternating Paralympic sports
- keeping two events but both with full Olympic medal status

However, none of these proposals was successful. It is noteworthy that all of these suggestions took the segregation between disabled and able-bodied athletes for granted arguing that this is necessary to guarantee equal classes by matching the different abilities.

Nowadays inclusion or integration into the Olympics is not any longer an objective of the IPC as it considers the Olympics and the Paralympics to be two parallel events of equal value. In 2003 the former president of the IPC, Philip Craven declared the integration debate to be closed and decided that from now on the struggle for inclusion will be in the "litterbin of history" (Craven 2004, 292). The intention of this position was certainly to strengthen the self-esteem of the Paralympic movement.

Athletes with disabilities competing in mainstream sports

Despite Philip Craven's declaration from 2003 the inclusion of athletes with disabilities into elite sport regained public interest and is today a contentious issue, vividly debated by athletes, organizations and media (Thomas & Smith 2009, 128). The revival of this debate is mainly due to the case of Oscar Pistorius (the sport related one) and more recently to the Markus Rehm case, two athletes with amputations claiming their right to compete against able-bodied athletes.

The South African sprinter Oscar Pistorius was not the first athlete with disabilities to compete in the Olympics. He was even not the first athlete with prosthetic limbs to participate. George Eyser, an American gymnast, won six medals, including three gold medals, competing with a wooden leg in the 1904 Olympic Games in St. Louis. Eyser was severely disabled, but not handicapped in the events he participated in. In 1904 there were no Paralympics and no special categories for disabled athletes; the Olympics, at this time, were accessible to all competitive athletes. His right to participate was not contested, even though, in at least one discipline, the rope climbing, his light wooden leg procured him an advantage over his opponents who had to carry their two heavy legs of flesh and blood.

Aside from George Eyser, there were more than a dozen athletes with disabilities who managed to participate in different Olympics since. For most of them their impairment was neither a real handicap nor an advantage when competing in their respective sports. Some showed extraordinary resilience and overcame their disability through tough self-discipline and hard training. All of them qualified for the Olympic Games without opponent protests, as their disability was never really questioned or considered to be an advantage.

Except for two wheelchair users in archery and George Eyser with his wooden leg in gymnastics, they used no artificial aid. A recent example for these disabled athletes, who reached the Holy Grail of high level sports, is Natalie du Toit from South Africa, a multiple gold medal winner at different Paralympic Games. She qualified for the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, where she finished 16th in the 10 km open water swimming race. When she competed, she swam without the aid of a prosthetic limb or flipper. The media celebrated and admired her courage and her resilience.

The reaction of the sports-world and the media was quite different, when her compatriot Oscar Pistorius entered the scene to become the first sprinter with prosthetic limbs competing in the Olympics. His ambition to compete against the very best able-bodied athletes caused great controversy. Sport scientists, officials and athletes criticized him, as they were persuaded that his J-shaped carbon-fiber prosthetics procured him an unfair advantage.

The International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) ruled Pistorius' prosthesis ineligible for use in competitions conducted under IAAF rules. Pistorius appealed against this decision to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in Lausanne claiming that "his fundamental human rights were breached, including equal access to Olympic principles and values" (Patel 2015, 112). The CAS supported Pistorius's appeal and revoked the IAAF council's decision referring to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Finally, this judgment opened the way to Pistorius' participation at the 2012 London Olympics.

Pistorius sporting career was abruptly ended when he was found guilty of culpable homicide, as he shot and killed his girlfriend. But there is another extraordinary athlete using a prosthetic limb who keeps the controversies about the inclusion of disabled athletes going: it is the German long jumper Markus Rehm. He is a left sided below knee amputee and he uses a carbon-fiber bladed prosthesis to jump off. His personal best places him within the best able-bodied long jumpers in the world. However, the International Association of Athletics Federations stopped his dream of an Olympic participation by amending – once more – its competition rules.

The technological progress blurs the distinction between therapy/substitution and enhancement, between the natural and the artificial. Pistorius can be considered to be the first cyborg at the Olympics and as such he is a threat to the myth of natural human sport performance and the natural order of sports (Magdalinski 2013). Markus Rehm is even more threatening as his performances could allow him to defeat the very best able-bodied long jumpers.¹⁾ In July 2014 he performed the longest jump at the German track and field championship for able-bodied athletes and only after a long discussion he was finally awarded the gold medal, but the German

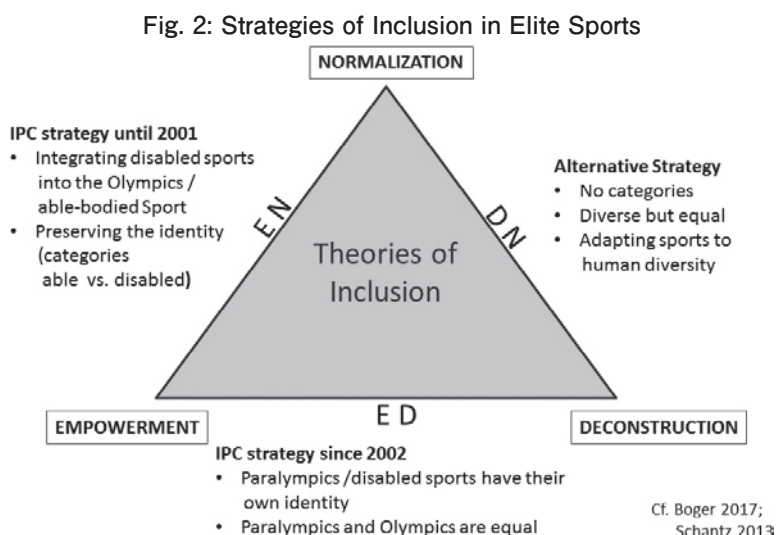
1) At the 2015 IPC Athletics World Championship in Doha he set his personal best at 8.40 m, a performance that would have been enough to win the long jump for able-bodied at the four Olympics after Sydney 2000 (2016 Rio de Janeiro, 2012 London, 2008 Beijing, 2004 Athens).

Athletics Federation refused to select him for the European Athletics Championships taking place five weeks later.

Strategies of inclusion

Under the presidency of Robert Steadward (1989-2001) the IPC promoted “integration of sports for athletes with disabilities into the international sports movement for able-bodied athletes while safeguarding and preserving the identity of sport for disabled athletes” (IPC 2000, art. II.4). It tried to empower disabled sport and athletes with disabilities by integration into mainstream sports, while preserving the categories *abled* and *disabled* (cf. Fig 2: empowerment by normalization declining deconstruction of categories).

Phillip Craven, president from 2001 to September 2017, tried to empower the Paralympic movement by breaching the hegemony of the Olympic movement. He wanted to develop an independent movement at eye level with the IOC, refusing the way of normalization but claiming its identity, independence, and autonomy (cf. Fig. 2).



In the particular field and context of high level competitive sport, both strategies are condemned to fail the promotion of inclusion. If Paralympic athletes try to breach the Olympic bastion, they have to deconstruct the categorization of athletes in *able-*

bodied and *disabled*, as the category *disabled* will always be a second class category in a highly competitive sports world that values only the very best, the most able.

Rankings, leagues, and class based on physical prowess and skills can be considered to be sport specific. Classifications or rankings based on proxy variables like age, gender or ability/disability are political acts that lead to segregation and that are often discriminatory and disempowering. Classifying human beings on the base of their abilities or disabilities can be seen as dehumanizing, degrading and humiliating. According to the anthropologist and former Paralympian David Howe, the process of classification “is an alienating experience, as each time a different set of individuals determines whether your body fits into the textbook of carnal typology that is acceptable to those who govern the particular element of Paralympic sport that the athletes wish to be a part” (Howe 2008, 71). Classification is a crude form of governmentality of the athlete’s bodies, a technology of dominance over the body (Foucault 1982; 2001).

The second strategy which – if we characterize it in marketing terms – claims its own brand identity is confronted with a powerful opponent, who has an enormous economical, symbolic, and social capital. Compared to the Olympic movement, the Paralympic movement will always be dominated and sidelined; at least as long as the high level sport doesn’t change completely its commercial logic. Albeit the Paralympic movement continues to grow and to flourish, “...segregation, even if necessary, results in stigma, making the disability-sports movement a victim of its own success and diversity” as Laura Kaminker (2001) convincingly stated.

Craven’s vision that normalization or inclusion is not necessary, as both movements are of equal values, is just wishful thinking. Why do athletes try to compete at the Olympics when the Paralympics are equivalent? Why is Marla Runyan, a legally blind American track & field athlete, prouder of her 8th place in the 1500 m Olympic final at Sydney than of her numerous Paralympic gold medals?

A comparison of both movements, even at first sight, clearly indicates that their power, their political and social impact, their media value, their financial and symbolic capital are quite different and that their power relation is not parallel but hierarchical: the Olympics are the premium event and the Paralympics come second. The equivalence of the two events is a complacent illusion; ranging from naïve self-delusion to self-interested artifice. The Paralympic movement will probably never

reach the prestige of the Olympic movement. Professional sport has become a commodity, a multi-billion dollar business, where the winner takes all. The IOC sells a world-wide mediated mega event that presents enchanting stories and values, as well as images of young beautiful, powerful, gracious and healthy athletes; it sells the myth of a sport event capable of creating a peaceful and better world. This product fits perfectly the demand of the average sport consumers. The Paralympic movement is still a communal movement which is united by a common identity, a common culture based on disability; even though it seeks to be an elite sport organization focusing on sporting excellence. The product the IPC tries to sell is quite different from that of the IOC and, at least until now, sport consumers are much less eager to buy it. For the average consumer sport is generally associated to the notions of health, vitality, ability, power, and independence while disability is stereotypically related to the labels of illness, invalidity, disability, helplessness and dependence (cf. Schantz & Gilbert 2012; Schantz 2013). The territory of the Olympic sportsmen and women is the stadium, but the territory of the people with disabilities is the special institution or the hospital (cf. Goffman 1963). Unfortunately this kind of labeling is still alive in many people's minds.

The Olympics and Paralympics are in binary opposition, which is hierarchical in nature. Indeed, as long as sporting performance is only recognized in absolute quantitative terms, reflecting the mainstream philosophy of our western competitive world, all people who are part of other than the very top category will automatically be marginalized. Sportsmen and even more so sportswomen in the disabled category will continue to be positioned as second class athletes and at the bottom of the world's physical elite scale (cf. Schantz & Gilbert 2012; Schantz 2013). According to Peter Kell and collaborators, they will be the losers in a sports world based on "free enterprise" that "contradicts the importance of the state structures to support the needs of the disabled where the market force repeatedly fail them in all sphere of life" (Kell et al. 2008, 165).

Two separate Games risk reinforcing the separation between the able-bodied athletes and those with disabilities; or, as Goggin and Newell (2005, 81) argue, "the existence of a special event for people identified as having disability is a painful reminder of inequity and injustice, and its presence perpetuates the discourse of 'special needs' and 'special events'". As long as the show sport doesn't change

radically its logic of “faster, higher, and stronger”, it will be utopian to think that by “becoming ‘Parallel Olympians’ athletes with disabilities can try to get away from the oxymoron that ‘disabled athletes’ may be perceived as and be allowed to associate themselves with a movement that sells itself as being about sport as a vehicle for peace and understanding as well as sport of the very highest level” (Brittain 2010, 93). The standards of play and performances in Paralympic sports will always be compared to the ‘norms’ in Olympic sports. Without fundamental change, there will always be the glamorous first class Games for the very best and then the second class Games for the brave Paralympians who have overcome their “terrible fate”. In our sports fanatic societies physical prowess often becomes an indicator of a person’s value, not only in sport, but also in other domains. By separating elite sport in a category for able-bodied and disabled sport we risk perpetuating the image of the less valuable disabled and as such to disempower the whole community of individuals with disabilities (Schantz 2013; Schantz & Gilbert 2012).

The strategies of the athletes with disabilities who competed in the Olympics have been different to the strategies of the IPC: they ignored categorization and almost all of them qualified by assimilation to the criteria of the Olympics: they adapted their bodies to the demands of able-bodied competition. Pistorius and Rehm refused to be placed in the disabled category by using artificial aids to enable them and to level the difference. However, the strategy of adaptation is limited to some very rare exceptionally resilient athletes in few sports and the integration into the Olympics by the use of compensatory technology is confronted with a lot of resistance from those who defend the myth of pure and natural sport.

So, is there no possibility to take the last bastion against inclusion?

Empowerment through integrating disabled categories into mainstream sport or considering Paralympics to be a particular movement as powerful as the Olympics is an illusion. Another strategy, the last remaining of the trilemmatic policies, the one that sacrifices empowerment and instead aims at normalization by deconstruction, seems to be more effective (cf. Fig. 2). The Paralympic Games, in their current form and conceptualization are not appropriate to empower the community of people with disabilities; only the deconstruction of the hierarchical binary categories Olympic –

Paralympic will promote inclusion of disabled athletes in the realm of elite sport. This strategy deconstructs the ideology of ableism and normalizes sport participation in elite sport by adapting sports to peoples' diversity instead of adapting people to sports. High level sport should offer genuine opportunities for all athletes to participate to the best of their abilities without hierarchical categorization. Even though this strategy doesn't directly contribute to the Paralympic Movement's empowerment, it will finally empower the individual athletes with disabilities as it will open up possibilities to choose. "From an empowerment perspective the right to make your own decisions should be more important than political ideals", Sørensen (2000, 13) stated as conclusion of her empirical study on integration and empowerment of athletes with disabilities in Norway. Therefore, we have to change rules, modify techniques and equipment, and even invent new sports which enable disabled athletes by accessibility.

An example of enabling rules change are the swimming competitions at the Olympics 2000 in Sydney, where a visual signal was added to the acoustical departure signal in order to allow fair competition for a participating swimmer with deafness. Why not consider the wheelchair as sports equipment, just like the bicycle? Wheelchair sports open for all athletes could be included in the Olympics, permitting disabled athletes to practice sport with and against able-bodied athletes even at highest level. The same could be done for example in the Winter Games with sit-skiing. Mixed relay races including athletes with prosthetic limbs could be organized. There are different examples of sports which are already accessible or which could easily be rendered accessible for people with disabilities, like powerlifting, shooting, archery, sailing, or tandem cycling (cf. Schantz 2001; Schantz & Gilbert 2012). We already have the chance that the different sports offer a variety of forms appropriate for a great diversity of body morphologies; now we need to widen this program in order to allow people with disabilities to find a sport that suits their abilities.

All kinds of categorizing build up hierarchical, hegemonic structures and thus lead to marginalization in a sports model which values only the absolute best. That's why the IOC should give equal access to the Olympic Games for excellent athletes from the whole range of human mankind "without any discrimination of any kind" as stipulated in the Olympic Charter (IOC 2015, 13) in order to stick to its claim of universalism. The IPC should conserve and develop the Paralympic Games as a show

case of the sporting culture for people with disabilities, maintaining and even fostering its political, economic, social, and cultural significance (Kazuo 2016). It should develop the Paralympic Movement/Games as an alternative sports culture which meets the needs of all people with disabilities, including severe disabilities, but keep integration and inclusion as a main objective (cf. Schantz 2001; Schantz & Gilbert 2012).

Sports and physical activities are socio-cultural constructions and as such vary in time and space.²⁾ In the 21st century we should not adapt humans to sports invented in the 19th century for the western and able-bodied male athlete, but adapt sports to the diversity of humans in order to fit the ethical standards of our time (Schantz 2016).

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2) Sometimes we can learn from old traditional sports; Sumo e. g. is much less concerned about categorization than 19th century Western Sports, as there are no weight categories.

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競技スポーツは障がい者の包摂を妨げる最後の障壁となっているのか

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教育、雇用、レジャー、文化など大半の社会的分野において、民主主義社会は、障がい者を包摂するために大きな努力をしている。2006年に国連総会において採択された障がい者の社会的包摂を保障する国際人権条約「障害者の権利に関する条約」の締約国は、すでに170カ国を超えた。

スポーツや運動の分野をみても、障がい者の包摂を目的とする行動、関与、プロジェクトが数多く認められる。とはいえ、こうした包摂の努力は、大方のところ、レクリエーションスポーツ、体育あるいは草の根スポーツに限られている。トップレベルにおいては、健常者スポーツと障がい者スポーツの間に明確な区別と分類が根強く残っている。この区分の最も顕著な例は、オリンピックとパラリンピックの厳格な分離である。これらのイベントを2種類に分類することは、障がいを持つアスリートの周縁化あるいは排除とさえ考えられ得る。オリンピックはおそらく常に、最も権威のあるのカテゴリーであり、障がいのある選手にはほぼ手の届かないものであるからだ。

競技スポーツの構造的な目的は、最優秀者を選抜して栄誉を讃えるために運動能力に従い分類し、順位をつけることにある。一方、包摂のコンセプトは、これとは反対に、呼び集め、多様性を高く評価し、能力（障がい）を尊重するものである。競技スポーツの主たるイデオロギーはAbleismである。Ableismとは、「共感、思いやり、優しさなど他の能力よりも、例えば生産性や競争力などの特定の能力を評価し奨励する特定の社会集団や社会構造の心理に言及するときに、障がいを持つ活動家たちが用いる観念である」(Wolbring 2008, 253)。競技スポーツは、競技場における一種の社会ダーウィニズム－最速の者、最強の者、最も有能な者、最も熟練した者の生存を促進するものである。

トップレベルのスポーツと包摂との間のこうした矛盾を考えると、競技スポーツは包摂と相容れないものであり、包摂に対する最後の障壁のひとつとなっていることが明らかであろう。とはいえ、この障壁を取り去るさまざまな試みがなされており、成功したものはまれであり、他は意見の分かれるもので、今なお盛んに議論が行われている。

本稿では、オリンピックとパラリンピックのこうした分離と、競技スポーツにおける競争と包摂の明白な非両立性の問題について、哲学、倫理学、障がい学、スポーツ科学、歴史の観点および概念を用いて論じる。著者の考えを説明するため、人工装具を着けてオリンピックに出場した初の短距離選手であるオスカー・ピストリウス、8.40 mの走り幅跳び記録を持つ片足切断者のマルクス・レーム、あるいはオリンピック水泳に切断者として初めて出場したナタリー・デュトワなどの特殊なケースを検討する。健常者のトップレベル競技において競い合いたいと考える障がい者アスリートは、数多くの障壁や抵抗に直面する。障がいを技術的な装置で補う場合には、技術的ドーピングや不公平の非難に直面する。補助器具なしには、彼らは一般に競争もできない。

最優秀者選抜の論理を特徴とするトップレベルの競技スポーツは、平等な機会と生来のままの（人工物を用いない）パフォーマンスという（神話的な）スポーツの価値観を依然として守ろうと、代償的な技術装置や補助器具を禁じている。そうしたハイレベルの競技スポーツにおいてアスリートの包摂を望むのであれば、既存のスポーツを適合させ、新しいスポーツを生み出さなければならない。こうして改変されたスポーツや新しいスポーツは、健常者・障がい者を問わず誰もがアクセスでき、参加と勝利の機会均等が可能な限りすべての人に提供すべきものである（Schantz & Gilbert 2012）。アクセスが確保されているスポーツの具体的例をいくつか挙げて議論する。

21世紀においては、私たちの時代の倫理基準に合うよう人間の多様性にスポーツを適合させるべきであって、西洋の健常な男性アスリートのために19世紀に考案されたスポーツに人間を適合させるべきではない（Schantz 2016）。