

# The construction of social inclusion through music education: Two Swedish ethnographic studies of the El Sistema programme

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## ABSTRACT

*Drawing on theories from sociology and music education, as well as closely linked disciplines, the article discusses how social inclusion is constructed in the choir and orchestra school El Sistema. The objective of the programme in Sweden is to use music as a vehicle for individual and social development as well as to serve as an intercultural meeting place and thereby for social inclusion. The results, generated from two ethnographic studies, in Gothenburg and Malmö, show that there are different ways of constructing social inclusion within El Sistema. Viewed from an integrative sociological perspective on music education, the students are primarily positioned as representatives of the El Sistema community, rather than as independent agents in control of the music and their learning. However, the programme also allows for temporarily interrupting the community rationale by enhancing teachers' agency and allowing the children to participate on their own terms—though this is mainly limited to the social events.*

*Keywords: social inclusion; music education; discourse analysis; El Sistema; culture; agency; space*

## Introduction

Since music education can be regarded as an arena for construction, performance, and negotiation of cultural meanings, norms and values, the field of music education has, in recent decades, seen growing awareness of the need to situate issues related to learning music within social questions (Jorgensen, 2003; Wright, 2014). Central concepts within this discussion are inclusion/exclusion and social justice (Dyndahl, Karlsen & Wright, 2014). However, issues of inclusion in music education are more complex than they might first appear and researchers raise different aspects of the concept. Elliott (2012) views social inclusion through music education as a political issue, while Jorgensen (2003) argues that achieving social inclusion requires changing music education, not just making it more widely available. In addition, Burnard, Dillon, Rusinek and Sæther (2008) suggest that inclusion in music classrooms is best understood in connection with the interplay of policies, structures, culture, and values specific to schools. However, Wright (2014) argues for integrative music education sociology. One central aspect of this music education sociology is to provide “opportunities for disruption of previously rationalised musical knowledge” (ibid.: 13), where students are allowed to speak with their own unique voices and take control of the music and of their learning. This, she argues, can lead to new insights into experiences of music making and new music education discourses.

A music education programme that has inspired music educators around the world because of its stated social inclusive aims is El Sistema. A choir and orchestra school originally developed in Venezuela in the 1970s (Hollinger, 2006; Tunstall, 2012), El Sistema was established in Sweden in 2010, first in Gothenburg and thereafter in Swedish multicultural urban arenas like Malmö, Stockholm, Södertälje, and other cities. While the overarching objective in Venezuela is to combat poverty patterns, in Sweden El Sistema focuses on breaking the typical segregation patterns found in metropolitan regions and the related social exclusion, problems described for example by Beach and Sernhede (2013). More specifically, the objective of the programme in Sweden is to use music as a vehicle for individual and social development and to serve as an intercultural meeting place, and thereby to work for social inclusion. Children growing up in all kinds of neighbourhoods, coming from different socio-economic conditions, and having different ethnic backgrounds, are given the opportunity to develop personally, socially, and musically in orchestras and choirs. In Gothenburg, lessons are offered three to five times a week, three for those who play in an orchestra and five for those involved in both an orchestra and a choir. The music education programme is organized as an after-school activity within the Community School of Music, a Swedish form of institutionalized voluntary after-school music education

primarily for children between 9 and 13 years of age. However, because El Sistema strives to give children opportunities to start playing at an early age, teaching is also provided in pre-school. As of spring 2016, El Sistema was located in 17 towns in Sweden and in 55 countries in the world.<sup>1</sup>

From the perspective of two ethnographic studies on El Sistema, the aim of our article is to discuss the practice of doing social inclusion in El Sistema Gothenburg (ESG) and El Sistema Malmö (ESM). The empirical data consists of interviews, focus group discussions and observations including teachers, children, musicians, and project leaders. The following research question is addressed: *How do the Swedish El Sistema programmes in Gothenburg and Malmö construct social inclusion in their practices?*

## Previous research on El Sistema

Even though El Sistema has spread to dozens of countries around the world it has not been examined or debated by educators or researchers to any significant extent. Only a few international research studies at postdoctoral level have been published in international peer-reviewed journals. A review by Creech, Gonzales-Moreno, Lorenzino & Waitman (2013), commissioned by the organization El Sistema Global, shows that most of the extant studies are evaluations or master's theses. These studies are limited by scanty empirical data as well as insufficient scientific quality. However, the review, which lists 85 studies in 44 El Sistema programmes in 19 countries, gives a picture of a rapidly growing field. Several of the reports on the Venezuelan programme point to the possibilities for increased agency, and development at the individual level. Personal development, psychological welfare and increased self-esteem are some aspects of such development highlighted in studies discussed in the review (Hollinger, 2006; Majno, 2012; Uy, 2012). Research on El Sistema in Sweden has so far examined learning ideals identified in statements made by different actors (Lindgren, & Bergman, 2014), the teachers perspective of the programme (Sæther, Bergman & Lindgren, in press), El Sistema in relation to national music education traditions (Bergman & Lindgren, 2014b), discourses on social integration within El Sistema (Bergman, Lindgren & Sæther, 2016) and the videos on the Swedish national website of El Sistema (Kuuse, Lindgren & Skåreus, 2016).

A completely different picture than the idealized one found in several research reports on the Venezuelan programme is found in newly published findings from an

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1 [www.elsistema.se](http://www.elsistema.se)

ethnographic, qualitative study based on a year of fieldwork (Baker, 2014). Baker critically examines El Sistema's concept of social action through music, and systematically deconstructs the beliefs about music as a force for social change. The symphony orchestra as a pedagogical tool for democracy and social development is questioned, as is the goal of promoting democracy by reproducing the Western art music canon. In Sweden, however, the link between the educational ideals of El Sistema and Western art music appears to be somewhat weaker. Although the programme largely treats Western art music as its natural platform, some ambivalence about musical genre is clearly present (cf. Bergman & Lindgren, 2014b). Another difference between El Sistema Venezuela and El Sistema Sweden is that Venezuela's educational philosophy is work-centred rather than child-centred, which creates a hierarchical dynamic of conventional teacher/pupil instruction with no room for creative thinking (Baker, 2014). In the case of El Sistema Sweden, the activities draw on both of these actually antagonistic discourses—the aesthetic ideal centred on the music and the creative ideal centred on the child—even though combining them still seems to be a struggle (Lindgren & Bergman, 2014). Following Baker, considerable attention has recently been given to shortcomings of El Sistema programmes around the world. Central issues here are the link between El Sistema programs in UK and neoliberalism (Bull, 2016) and between El Sistema Costa Rica and neo-colonialism (Rosabal-Coto, 2016). Bull (2016) argues that many practices associated with instruction in classical music have to be changed for it to be able to break down social boundaries. In El Sistema Sweden the activities seems to have much in common with community music practices through its interconnections between different kinds of communities, learning contexts, and social cultures (Bergman & Lindgren, 2014a). However, the effects of El Sistema's work for inclusion in Sweden are not yet studied. The present study on how social inclusion is constructed within two Swedish El Sistema practices should be seen as a first step in approaching this aspect.

## **Central theoretical concepts**

Music can be regarded as a resource belonging to the macro as well as the micro level of societies, for individuals or groups who wish to be, act, or express themselves in a certain way. DeNora (2000) shows how music affords a range of opportunities for human beings to experience a sense of agency and participate in social activities. She also points to the importance of studying musical praxis to understand how music serves as a tool for maintaining social order. There is a dynamic dimension to

the relation between music and identity, which is sometimes forgotten or hidden in common assumptions. One of these is the assumption that music, one way or another, reflects or represents the people. In its most extreme form it becomes cultural essentialism—this can be expressed in claims like “only African-Americans can appreciate African-American music” (Frith, 1996: 108). However, music made in a certain place for a certain purpose can in fact immediately be used in another place for completely different purposes. Even if the people who first used it shaped the music, music as experience leads its own life (Frith, 1996). Music in this sense is a key part of identity construction, since it conveys an intense sense of me and others, the subjective and the collective. Following this argument, music in itself, in aesthetic praxis, articulates an understanding of group relations as well as of individuality.

This puts music in an interesting position in relation to aspects of democracy, for example discretionary power and a sense of belonging and visibility. De Nora (2000) expresses this as negotiations on positions in the world. She describes how people “regulate, elaborate and substantiate themselves as social agents” (ibid.: 47) by participating in musical practices. In this process, music serves as a medium for empowering and renegotiating our positions in the world. It is in this respect that music education carries a potential for promoting democracy, as it facilitates our negotiations about positions in society. Music might offer ways of understanding democracy through experience, not least through the simple fact that ensemble playing requires listening closely to one’s fellow players. However, as Bull (2016) reminds us, music and music education do not automatically serve democracy. In our opinion musical and cultural activities can never be regarded as politically neutral, because they always, explicitly or implicitly, are anchored in some kind of social and cultural viewpoint. When art projects and cultural activities are highlighted as important for developing strong societies, they must be related to the cultural and social discourses on which they are based, as well as to how the intentions are performed and constituted (Wetherell, 2008). For that reason, given its explicit aim to provide children an opportunity to develop as human beings through education in Western art music, El Sistema in Sweden must above all be contextualized within a Swedish educational and political discursive frame. In Swedish classrooms, musical activities are dominated by rock and pop music and governed by certain preconceptions about how to learn this genre, which has consequences for pupils’ possibilities to develop musically (Lindgren & Ericsson, 2010). From this point of departure, identity is here understood in terms of subjects being continuously constructed and reconstructed through cultural and social practices as well as in relation to psychological and emotional motives and beliefs (Bauman, 1996). Therefore, when studying the implementation of El Sistema in Sweden it is relevant to examine the conditions for negotiation

of subject positions. This implies analytically focusing on the spaces created to enable inclusion and interaction between participants in El Sistema, but also on situations where subject positions are constructed. The concept of *agency* (Karlsen & Westerlund, 2010) is used to describe the connection between societal structures and individual agents. It concerns how and to what extent the individual, for example the student or the teacher, has the “ability to possess some capacity for social action and its modes of feeling” (DeNora, 2000:153). Karlsen (2011) distinguishes between collective and individual agency. Individual dimensions of agency are used for negotiating and extending one’s own ability to act, unlike collective dimensions of agency, which are used in socially negotiating collective agency, for instance using music for regulating and structuring social encounters. The concept of *space* in social practices has been recognized by researchers as closely connected to agency, subjectivity and social relationships. Soja (1996) connects space to building communities of renewal by working for diversity in the exploration of different social spaces as well as practising the spaces for resistance.

For children and teachers in multicultural school settings, such as ESM and ESG, agency is of particular interest, since they often have to relate to and negotiate within a variety of social settings. In addition some of these different contexts might contain conflicting sets of norms and values. The children navigate between family and school norms, while teachers balance between what can be considered the conflicting aims—artistic and social—of El Sistema. Similar to how the concepts of agency and space can be used in describing music as a means for individuals to negotiate their position in different social contexts, enculturation supplies a theoretical frame to the transactional process of learning and change that El Sistema might offer. The concept of enculturation originates from social anthropology, and is sometimes used as a synonym for socialization. Consequently there are two ways of defining enculturation: (1) as a learning process enabling one to acquire a new culture, and (2) as both a learning process and a further development of a culture—that is, as involving more than just adaptation to the culture. The first definition has gained a dominant position, however we want to stress the relevance of the second definition, suggested by Shimahara (1970), for the study of El Sistema. This definition points to the difference between cultural transmission and enculturation, stressing that enculturation is a dynamic transaction that includes creative adaptation to the culture at a structural level and modification of the culture at a micro level. As El Sistema is implemented in the Swedish school landscape, this process of both acquiring and inquiring takes place on many levels. It involves the children, the teachers, the schools, and the community music schools.

## Design

The studies in Gothenburg and Malmö are both ethnographic but differ when it comes to method. The Gothenburg study, where the collection of material began in 2011, can be likened to an ongoing process (Aull Davies, 2008) During the first period, 2011–2013, data was primarily gathered from organizations, and ten interviews were held with operational leaders, municipal officials, and the GSO management. From 2013 to 2015, the focus was on the educational practice and actors involved in the daily work, and five interviews were held with teachers and musicians. Probably during the same period, field notes were taken from ten rehearsals and lessons, seven family gatherings (called *Vänstays*, a wordplay combining English “Wednesdays” and the Swedish word for “friend” *vän*), and six concerts. In the Gothenburg study, interviews and observations have been made regularly in every school year 2011–2015, making it possible to follow the development and expansion of El Sistema from a project in a single city district to a regular practice with activities throughout the city. Frequent talks with the operational leaders concerning future plans have led to the research focus being directed to different activities each semester. The design of the study in Malmö includes fieldwork at the two El Sistema schools where the ESM started, observations of collaborative activities between El Sistema and Malmö Symphony Orchestra, and interviews with teachers and El Sistema leaders. In addition diary notes from the programme facilitator and one of the teachers were collected. One of the authors participated in some of the musical activities, playing the violin with children and teachers, taking inspiration from “sensuous scholarship” (Stoller, 1997). The anticipated result of this methodological profile is to establish a relationship that will result in future interviews with the children, and contribute to a sense of shared experience when interviewing the teachers. During the first semester of El Sistema in Malmö, the researcher participated one day per week, together with the six teachers and the 450 children (school years 1–4). In addition three evening concerts with and for parents (*Vänstays*) were observed, as well as the evaluation workshop with teachers and the programme facilitator at the end of the fall 2013 semester. The material used in this article has been selected from interviews with operational leaders and teachers and from observations. Informal conversations with the teachers, organizers, and children present during observations are also referred to.

The empirical material has been analysed with discourse analysis, as proposed by Potter and Wetherell (1987), focusing on rhetorical strategies used by the actors to handle different situations and to position themselves and others. We began the analysis by focusing on similarities and differences in both verbal and non-verbal interactions among the actors. On this micro level the context is seen as unique, but

the analysis also focused on common features stemming from overarching educational and musical discourses more closely connected to Foucault's (1971/1993) concept of discourse. We consider discourse to be multimodal and mediated (Scollon, 2001) and the analysis has therefore also focused on the visual and auditory dimensions. In sum, the analysis was directed at the actors' behaviours and actions, both in their verbal and non-verbal interactions and in their performance of music.

## Results

Our analysis resulted in the identification of two ways of constructing social inclusion within the context of El Sistema. These draw on two different dimensions of agency: a collective dimension and an individual dimension.

### Emphasizing children's musical agency from a collective dimension

The results from both the Malmö and the Gothenburg studies show that one way to construct a collective El Sistema subjectivity is to make use of identity markers. This idea is realized in practice by promoting togetherness and collective strength in lyrics such as "We are El Sistema", "We are all cool, at Hammarkulle School" and "El Sistema, Yeah" (ESG). The idea of having a common repertoire at all El Sistema schools can also be seen as a way of constructing a collective subjectivity.

We have constructed a common repertoire so that we can visit each other in different parts of the town, in Backa and Bergsjön, and sing together and all feel at home... a new child stands next to another, singing the same song.  
(Operational leader ES Gothenburg)

The use of common lyrics and repertoire is legitimized by the rhetoric of including everyone in the "El Sistema family." Subjectivity is articulated as multiple and diverse and created in social situations, though with the restriction that an El Sistema identity is the easiest one to build in relation to what is provided by the programme. A common El Sistema identity is also used to achieve inclusion by physically mixing children from all parts of the town together with professional musicians from Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra (GSO) at the so-called Side-by-Side-concerts at the Concert Hall.

Similarly, the results of the Malmö study show how both the teachers and the El Sistema leadership strive for social inclusion by working with musical competence

and social skills. During the fieldwork period, a picture evolved of a pedagogical activity where the children's musical training is connected to the ambition to counteract segregation through the construction of a collective "we". This is expressed, for example, in one of the newly composed songs:

We want to build Malmö with music and song. We want to build Malmö from stone and concrete. We want to build bridges between all the people, between all the people in the city of Malmö. (Translated from the Swedish original text)

The emblematic use of ESM can be understood as a response to the Malmö Commission's report on necessary reforms to create a more sustainable city (Salonen, 2012; Stigendal & Östergren, 2013). In balancing between the two aspirations—artistic and social—democracy is mentioned in connection with equality and the effort to include marginalized groups. There is, however, a clear ambivalence regarding the possible subordination of artistic goals to democratic ones. Both teachers and leaders often emphasize artistic achievements.

Unlike in Malmö, however, where ES is implemented in two districts, both typical multi-ethnic areas, in Gothenburg it is implemented in all city districts. The reason for this is to bring children from different socio-cultural settings into contact with each other. To make that happen, specific intercity district meetings were arranged during the spring semester of 2015. These meetings were a special focus of the research study during this period. The analysis of one of the meeting observations showed that having children and their parents in the same room singing, playing, and listening together did not automatically lead to new social connections or interactions between individuals. Rather, the only interactions identified were between parents who seemed to know each other in advance. At another arranged meeting between children from different city districts, it was obvious that new contacts were even hindered because there was no guidance about where to sit or what to do as a visiting parent. In a joint concert by two El Sistema schools located in different socio-cultural settings, the children were grouped together during the refreshment break with one or two children from the other school with the task of interviewing each other about specific questions such as their favourite food, favourite activity, etc. Some, but not all of the children fulfilled the task, but the directed assignment did not lead to more than a dutiful conversation. When a girl from the school that organized the joint concert was asked if she knows any children from the other school, she answered:

I recognize them when I meet them, but I don't know them (Child, 2015).

Since the collaboration between the schools was established a few years previously and the girl has been an El Sistema pupil for several years, her answer is rather noteworthy. Her statement suggests that the efforts to create a common space in the form of joint concerts do not seem to automatically make interaction happen between children and families from different city districts. The challenge for El Sistema in Gothenburg thus seems to be to create a place and space where interaction possibly could take place spontaneously but from a child-inclusive perspective, that is, where the children are able to participate in decisions about where, when and how to interact.

Another example of how inclusion is strived for in the practice of El Sistema is the performance of the song *Pata Pata* (originally sung by South African artist Miriam Makeba) at one of the joint concerts visited during spring semester 2015. As part of the rehearsal the choir leader invites the children to make movements with their instruments telling them: "Stand up and swing along with your bodies, it makes it sound better". At the concert held the same afternoon, the parents are invited to participate both as singers and by doing the specific moves the teacher instructs. Those who participate by singing and moving receive affirmation from the choir leader who, for example, gives thumbs-up to a mother who is singing and moving along to the music during the song. At the same time other parents are observed taking less part in the movements suggested in this situation. Instead, they are focusing on the activities on stage, watching and listening to the children's performance. Giving affirmation to the parents who act in line with what is requested also means excluding parents who do not, which is contrary to the stated aim of including not only children, but also their family members in the practice.

The empirical material from Gothenburg indicates that the strong ambition to socially include everyone highlights the collective social agency at the expense of the collective musical agency. This is something that the leader of the community school of music and arts in Malmö (Malmö kulturskola), that hosts El Sistema, considers to be a risk. Stressing the importance of the artistic dimension instead, he says: "Otherwise we will sink to the level of a social project, just like any other." In this context he also describes Western classical music as a universal cultural right, and considers the collaboration with the symphony orchestra to be a key to success. When the symphony orchestra visits the sport hall in the children's district to perform with the El Sistema pupils, it reflects the ambition to include all of Malmö's inhabitants in the cultural offerings. For most of the children, this concert was their first encounter with live classical music. They were literally integrated into the orchestra, sitting at the feet of the musicians, or singing, accompanied by the orchestra.

By spending time together, socializing naturally through music, we also get natural social relations in the community at large. This is what we've always done, and there's always been a need for some kind of catalyst to break through the artificial hindrances we tend to erect between each other. El Sistema can be such a catalyst. (Music school leader)

When talking about the democratic and inclusive dimension, the community music school teacher touches on the risk of a stigmatizing effect when El Sistema is presented as an activity to promote integration and aiming to include "the other": "We don't want to talk about the differences; look how alike we are with an oboe in our mouth or a violin in our hand."

Even though new spaces are explored when El Sistema pupils have the chance to leave their neighbourhoods and meet other children in different parts of the city, the construction of a univocal and solid collective subjectivity could be risky from a pluralist point of view, since striving to include marginalized groups in the collective is difficult to do without labelling people as excluded (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998). The inclusive approach of strengthening group subjectivity could paradoxically have an adverse effect on its ambition to explore spaces for meetings between different social and cultural groups. Using music (and music education) to structure social encounters is associated with power as well (Karlsen, 2011). As shown above, those who have the mandate to decide what instruments to play and what music to listen to, or what social relationships are to be promoted, are the teachers—not the children.

### Emphasizing the individual dimension of teachers' musical agency

Another way of doing social inclusion within the practice of El Sistema is to emphasize the production of teacher's individual agency. One way of doing this is to give them space to compose their own tunes for teaching purposes and to constantly reflect on the challenges in their work. Several of the teachers in both Malmö and Gothenburg have also started studying at bachelor or master level in music education research and are planning research projects with a bearing on the implementation and further development of El Sistema. Another way is to develop new teaching methods focused on making room for musical experiences (rather than just verbal instructions). One of the few occasions where there was a lot of talk was the first lesson after the meeting with the symphony orchestra in the sport hall:

I just want to add one more thing, and then perhaps everyone can say one more thing. Would that be fair? I need to say one more thing...The first time I

heard a symphony orchestra, I think it was when I was in high school, I can't even remember exactly when it was, but it wasn't earlier, I must have been 16 years old or so. And you have already heard one! I think that's marvellous! Just imagine how much better you... You will become much better [players] than I am! (Teacher)

This quote shows how a teacher tries to guide the children to identify their own possibilities and discretionary power by presenting the teacher's own story. The teacher also expresses the idea that listening to symphonic music can motivate young people to develop their skills and eventually become good musicians themselves. The earlier they listen to such music the more likely they are to succeed. This might be interpreted as a cultural imposition of Western classical music, or a cultural transmission (Shimahara, 1970) into another prevailing musical culture. However, in the Swedish context, where popular music has been the prevailing school-music discourse for many decades (Lindgren & Ericsson, 2010), this might also be interpreted as an example of making space for resistance (Soya, 1996) on a macro level. From this perspective, providing space for the music teacher's narrative about symphonic music could be described as enhancing her own personally experienced musical agency in a teaching practice navigating outside the prevailing school discourses in Sweden.

The teachers in both Malmö and Gothenburg are cooperating and working together in teams with other teachers and with musicians in the symphony orchestras. However, in Gothenburg the teachers also work closely with other El Sistema schools, and in connection with the annual music camp they also meet not only teachers from other districts in Gothenburg or from other Swedish cities, but also teachers from other countries visiting the *Side by Side* camp together with their pupils. Since Gothenburg regularly invites orchestras and music leaders from Venezuela to visit, they also come in contact with other teaching cultures. One example of how visiting instructors can be bearers of completely different teaching ideals was when Venezuelan conductor Ron Davis Álvarez—invited as a guest instructor in ESG—commanded a boy to try a perfect drumbeat in a way he was not used to. Afterwards the operational leaders discussed this in terms of Swedish music education being a bit too lax compared to that in other countries, considering it something that needed to be dealt with. From this example El Sistema might be understood as a potential space for pupils to make strong efforts to excel, and where pupils will be included through such efforts. However, including children on the basis of their achievement might also lead to excluding those who do not strive hard enough. However, the teachers more commonly emphasize the greater possibility to include children with social needs in El Sistema than in the regular training in the community music and arts schools. One teacher says:

Then we have another pupil who doesn't take part in the lessons, comes to *Vänstays* for the refreshments, and performs at the concerts even though he has not practised at all and doesn't know what tune we're playing. But, in his case some other need is being met I think. (Teacher)

This quote shows a different perspective on including children in El Sistema. By stressing the importance of giving some children the possibility to participate in social activities such as *Vänstay* without requiring them to take part in the performance, one creates a more inclusive space for children who otherwise may feel intimidated by social activities.

In the teachers' opinion, the teamwork that characterizes El Sistema marks a major change from the more traditional single-teacher work at community schools of music and arts. El Sistema has enabled the teachers to collaborate on developing new teaching methods for group and peer learning. It has also provided them with greater possibilities to reflect on the values, guidelines, and traditions that influence their working conditions. In this new situation, the teachers have emphasized their agency and are continuously developing teaching methods that suit the dual aim of El Sistema: both inclusion and artistic mastery. However the Gothenburg teachers see their role as more comprehensive than in other teaching situations. One teacher says:

We're expected to be on personal terms with the kids we teach. We become more human. I feel more complete as a teacher in El Sistema; it's not just for show—my mission begins on the tram ride to work. Even on my breaks I'm there for them. To me, the educator role is different because it becomes a meeting between people in a different way. (Teacher)

The expectations referred to in this quote can be seen as constructing the El Sistema teacher as someone who takes responsibility not only for the pupils' learning processes but also for their social needs. In relation to El Sistema's aim of promoting social inclusion, the teachers might be understood as important actors who facilitate inclusion by creating a space where they and the children can meet.

## Discussion

In this article we have demonstrated the existence of different ways of constructing social inclusion within El Sistema Sweden. From the perspective of enculturation,

understood as both adaptation and modification (Shimahara, 1970), the two Swedish El Sistema contexts can be characterized as constructing social inclusion from two somewhat contradictory points of departure. First, social inclusion is promoted by emphasizing children's musical agency from a collective point of view. The construction of a collective "we" in regulated and structured social encounters could be related to what Shimahara (1970) defines as transmission of a culture. Secondly, emphasising the teacher's musical agency from an individual point of view, by expanding both musical and pedagogical space, is above all linked to a modification of the same culture. This can be connected with Jorgensen's (2003) way of defining social inclusion, where changing music education creates social inclusion and both strategies can be regarded as strongly grounded in a socio-political discourse of education (Elliott, 2012).

Further, the possibilities for stimulating musical agency are not always taken advantage of to produce space for diversity (Soja, 1996) on a micro level. Rather, the regulated and well-structured construction of an inclusive collective subjectivity sometimes appears to oppose the development of multiple identities, which has been put forward as essential to exploring democracy in music education (Karlsen & Westerlund, 2010). And correspondingly, from an integrative sociological perspective on music education (Wright, 2014), the students are primarily positioned as representatives of the El Sistema community, rather than as independent agents that are in control of the music and of their learning. However, the programme also allows for temporarily interrupting the community rationale by enhancing teachers' agency and allowing the children to participate on their own terms—though this is mainly limited to the social events.

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