



***Disability, an operator to question norms ?***

**Alter Conference**

**EHESP, Rennes, 8-9 & 10 July 2020**

Call for proposals

This call for papers is directed at everyone involved in human and social science research on disability and the loss of autonomy: including work that addresses conceptual and organisational aspects of research, field research, scientific production, qualitative and quantitative methods, etc. Responses from all social fields are welcome (education, employment, culture and recreation, housing, transport, human and technical assistance, political participation, emotional and sexual life, etc.).

This 9<sup>th</sup> conference aims to discuss the construction of normality and, more broadly, the system of thought that structures our societies in which being “able” is the norm in the sense of both the most widespread and the most desirable situation. The aim of this critical perspective is therefore to highlight how our societies are structured in relation to the notion of the able individual. While the recent call to build inclusive societies would appear to herald a radical turning point, what is the reality? Have we truly finished with representations of disability that tend towards the negative, the defective or even the tragic? To what extent are the “heroized” figures of disability, omnipresent in the public space, perpetrating the representation of disability as a deviation from the norm?

Special attention will be paid to the concept of ableism. F. Campbell (2001) defines it as a “network of beliefs, processes and practices that produces a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species typical and therefore essential and fully human. Disability then is cast as a diminished state of being human”. Contemporary uses extend this concept to the intersection of mental health, cognitive and, more generally, health norms. Along with other bias like ethnocentrism, ableism operates in a systemic and often unconceived way. Since the 1990s, it has gradually grown into activist spheres, then into the scientific field. First developed in the Anglo-Saxon countries, it has unequally spread out into other geographical or linguistic areas.

Although the questioning of the ableist point of view organises disability studies, it is only developed in restricted areas of research about disabilities and this conference aims at opening them up.

To what extent does this notion help us to understand and question the construction of normality at work in our societies and our research? What does the concept of ableism contribute in comparison to other approaches like discrimination, segregation, oppression? The critical approach based on ableism is spreading beyond the field of disability to question health or capacity inequalities. It meets, for example, the analysis made by sociologists working on ageing who highlight how important are the norms of the young, active and independent person and the representations of the old people in need of care as dependent; they show different forms of ageism operating in our societies.

The conference will revolve around transversal issues such as:

- Definitions, issues and uses of the concept of norms: including the relation between activist and scientific uses of the concept: what congruences and tensions they elicit? Whether disability studies can be a tool for emancipatory action; epistemological and methodological considerations.
- Research design and subjects: including issues/ questions such as: can we still claim to conduct a “neutral” research on disability? Can academic standards (especially peer review) accept a step aside from the non-disabled point of view? Do we need (and if so how) to identify “where we are coming from” and via which research devices can we highlight and overcome our “unthoughts”? Participation of people directly involved is currently identified as a prime way to escape unconceived ideas and bias; what are the issues and the conditions (concrete, ethical, epistemological), the benefits and the limits of this participation?
- Discriminations on the grounds of disability (and in a broader sense health issues, age, etc.). Besides direct discriminations, there are also indirect discriminations, thought frameworks implying a “self-evident” norm based on non-disabled individuals, a distinction between “us” and “them” – including in “positive” action and so-called “inclusive” policies where equality might not always be met. Can the expansion of a right to non-discrimination get along with disability policies initiated a century ago? These are still policies of accessibility, with what they say about a shift (or not) in norms of reference. We are interested in an intersectional perspective, in articulations between the categories of domination (able, male, bourgeois, white...), as well as on the empirical level (relations between feminist, antiracist, disabled movements).
- Representations of individuals in the research. Does the criticism of ableism reproduce the distinction between able/disabled people or does it question it? Which definitions of people with disabilities does the criticism of ableism question? How are they labelled in research (service users, social actors, surveyed individuals, disabled persons, persons with disabilities, vulnerable persons, etc.) and what does this implicate? Does this opened perspective help us in articulating differently dependence and autonomy? Or does it only show how much contemporary societies are tied to a

fantasy of an “average norm” and how much they struggle to include a plurality of human functioning?

Workshops and discussions will also be organised to examine this reflection in accordance with specific themes and areas of social life:

- education, training and debates concerning inclusion;
- the place of disabled persons in work and employment;
- emotional, sexual, reproductive and family life;
- access to leisure activities and culture;
- relationships with the body and access to health;
- accessibility and mobility;
- life at home and in specialist institutions;
- experiences and experiential knowledge of disability;
- political and civic life, etc.

The research presented can relate to present times or present a historical perspective. The scientific committee will favour proposals that present innovative and original results in the field of social science research on disability.

The conference languages will be English and French. Junior and senior researchers are welcome to participate.

*Before submitting your paper, please create your sciencesconf account. This account gives you access to the Sciencesconf platform and all the sites of the conference: [Sciencesconf-Registration](#).*

**2<sup>nd</sup> February 2020** will be the deadline for submission of proposals (title, short presentation of the authors, summary of the presentation/3000 signs max. ; indicate the problem, methods and results) at the following website address: <https://alterconf2020.sciencesconf.org/>

You will be notified regarding the acceptance of the abstracts and session proposals by **March 2020**.

**Indicative references**

- Bardeau, J.-M., 1977, *Infirmités et inadaptation sociale—un regard politique sur l'infirmité*, Paris, Payot.
- Campbell, F.K., 2001. Inciting Legal Fictions: "Disability's" date with Ontology and the Ableist Body of the Law. *Griffith Law Review*, vol. 10, n° 1 : 42–62.
- Campbell, F.K., 2008, Refusing Able(ness): A Preliminary Conversation about Ableism. *Journal Media/Culture*, vol. 11, n°3. <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/view/46>.
- Campbell, F.K., 2008. Exploring internalised Ableism using critical race theory, *Disability & Society*, 23(2): 151-162.
- Davis, L., 1995, *Enforcing Normality: Disability, Deafness and the Body*, London, Verso.
- Feder Kittay, E., 2015, Quality of life and the desire for normalcy: Problems, prospects, and possibilities in the life of people with severe cognitive disability, *ALTER, European Journal of disability Research*, vol. 9, n° 3: 175–185.
- Goodley D., 2017, *Dis/ability studies: theorising disableism and ableism*, London, New York, Routledge.
- Shakespeare, T., 2006, *Disability rights and wrongs*, New York: Routledge.
- Tabin J.-P., Piecsek M., Perrin C., Probst I., 2019, *Repenser la normalité. Perspectives critiques sur le handicap*, Lormont, Le Bord de l'eau.
- Watson, N. & Vehmas, S., 2016, Exploring normativity in Disability Studies, *Disability and Society*, vol. 31, n° 1: 1-16.
- Winance, M., 2004, Handicap et Normalisation. Analyse des transformations du rapport à la norme dans les institutions et les interactions, *Politix*, vol. 17, n° 66: 201-227.

**Organisational committee:**

- Bertrand Louis, EHESS, CEMS (FRE 2023-U1276)
- Brégain Gildas, CNRS, CoRHASi, ARENES (UMR 6051)
- Campeon Arnaud, EHESP, CoRHASi, ARENES (UMR 6051)
- Cuenot Marie, EHESP, CoRHASi
- Delourmel Véronique, EHESP
- Fillion Emmanuelle, EHESP, CoRHASi, ARENES (UMR 6051)
- Guevel Marie-Renée, EHESP, CoRHASi, ARENES (UMR 6051)
- Godeau Emmanuelle, EHESP, CoRHASi, Inserm-SPHERE (UMR 1027), ARENES (UMR 6051)
- Jaffrès Fanny, EHESP, CoRHASi, Cresppa-LabToP (UMR 7217)
- Mafféi Régine, EHESP
- Moreau Delphine, EHESP, CoRHASi, ARENES (UMR 6051)
- Payen Emeline, EHESP
- Pierre Kerri-Anne, EHESP
- Rapegno Noémie, EHESP, CoRHASi, ARENES (UMR 6051)
- Roussel Pascale, EHESP, CoRHASi
- Sopadzhyan Alis, EHESP, CoRHASi, ARENES (UMR 6051)
- Valdes Béatrice, EHESP, CoRHASi, ARENES (UMR 6051)
- Ville Isabelle, EHESS and INSERM, CEMS (FRE 2023-U1276)

**Scientific committee :**

- Baar Monika, Leiden University, Netherlands
- Baudot Pierre-Yves, Université Paris Dauphine, France
- Bertrand Louis, EHESS, CEMS (FRE 2023-U1276)
- Brégain Gildas, CNRS, France

Brulé Emeline, School of Engineering and Informatics of Sussex, United-Kingdom  
Campéon Arnaud, EHESP, France  
Cuenot Marie, EHESP, France  
Dirringer Josepha, Université Rennes 1, France  
Fillion Emmanuelle, EHESP, France  
Gardien Ève, Université Rennes 2, France  
Godeau Emmanuelle, EHESP, France  
Godrie Baptiste, Université de Montréal, Canada  
Guevel Marie-Renée, EHESP, France  
Jaffrès Fanny, EHESP, France  
Lejeune Aude, CNRS, France  
Marcellini Anne, Université de Lausanne, Suisse  
Mitra Sophie, Fordham University, USA  
Moreau Delphine, EHESP, France  
Moscoso Melania, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC), Espagne  
Probst Isabelle, Haute Ecole de santé de Vaud (HESAV), Switzerland  
Rapegno Noémie, EHESP, France  
Reaume Geoffrey, York University, Canada  
Revillard Anne, Sciences Po, France  
Sherlaw William, EHESP, France  
Sopadzhyan Alis, EHESP, France  
Tabin Jean-Pierre, Haute école de travail social et de la santé Lausanne (HES-SO), Switzerland  
Valdès Béatrice, EHESP, France  
Van Trigt Paul, Leiden University, Netherlands  
Ville Isabelle, Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS), France  
Winance Myriam, Cermes3-Inserm, France  
Wright Stephanie, University of Sheffield, United-Kingdom