



ALTER
EUROPEAN SOCIETY FOR
DISABILITY RESEARCH

11TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

PROTECTION, AUTONOMY, EMANCIPATION. AN (IM)POSSIBLE ALLIANCE?

June 29 – 30, 2023

EHESS – Centre des colloques, Campus Condorcet Aubervilliers, Paris, France

CALL FOR PAPERS

This new edition of the ALTER conferences proposes to examine the dynamics between various forms of protection and practices aimed at promoting the autonomy and inclusion of people with disabilities through the lenses of their potential for emancipation or oppression (Fraser, 2017).

Framework. This call for papers is part of the annual meeting of Alter – European Society for Disability Research/Société Européenne de Recherche sur le Handicap (<http://alter-asso.org>). The Conference will be held on Thursday June 29 and Friday June 30, 2023 at the Condorcet Campus, Conference Center in Aubervilliers (France), and will be hosted by the team of the Programme Handicap & Sociétés of the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) (<http://phs.ehess.fr/>) in partnership with the Programme Prioritaire de Recherche (PPR) on autonomy.

Public. Junior or senior scholars in the humanities and social sciences whose area of expertise is disability studies or related issues, such as mental health or loss of autonomy, as well as professionals and anyone directly concerned by disability involved in participatory research processes are welcome to submit their proposals. Research emerging from the fields of sociology, anthropology, history, philosophy, psychology, education, law, and political science is particularly sought, but this is not an exhaustive list.

Languages of the conference. English, French, International Sign (IS), French Sign Language (LSF).

Background. Over the past few decades, social protection policies promoted by welfare states for persons with disabilities have come under a double criticism. The first direction of critique comes from persons with disabilities themselves. They denounce a system rooted in paternalistic relations of domination, that maintains their dependence, keeping them in a passive role, and favouring their

segregation and oppression. In the 1970s, persons with disabilities came together and led a significant movement for the adoption of anti-discrimination legislation and policy, based on human rights. At the dawn of the twentieth-first century, it is the activation policies that challenge the previous social protection perspectives. Opposing a logic of assistance, deemed to weaken the individuals, activation policies advance instead a logic of individual contractualism and reciprocal obligations (Boivin, 2008). The mission facing the State now no longer is to protect individuals, but to restore their capacity for choice and action and their individual autonomy. These two lines of criticism converge in favour of a treatment of disability based on human rights, rejecting protective social policies for their oppressive nature. The inclusive doctrine is on the move. It is expressed through numerous regulatory texts and translated at all territorial levels into a myriad of mechanisms seeking to promote the full participation of persons with disabilities and their self-determination. It is also affirmed through the demand for the abolition of legal systems of substitute decision-making (such as guardianship/curatorship or forced treatment) or even penal protective provisions such as criminal immunity.

These transformations appear, as Jean-Louis Genard (2009) suggests, to mark the passage from a "disjunctive anthropology" based on the distinction and mutual exclusion between autonomy and dependence, and a strict divide between those deemed "capable" and those deemed "incapable", to a "conjunctive anthropology" that places "vulnerability" at the heart of the human experience and locates everyone on a continuum, as both capable of autonomy and inscribed into relationships of dependency. Ontological vulnerability combined with capacities for resilience, opening the way for emancipatory forms of protection, as in the theories of care, but can also result, through activation policies, in new forms of oppression associated with a greater demand for responsibility and ability. The paradoxical increase in the use of legal coercive measures, both civil and criminal, is in fact an indicator of the risks of this new form of alienation.

In fact, more than an overhaul of disability policies, it is a sort of hybridization that can be observed in most European countries, with new political instruments, inspired by the repertoire of rights, being added to traditional social protection policies of welfare states (Waddington & Diller, 2002). The field of work can thus combine a policy of quotas, forms of sheltered work and anti-discriminatory measures. The slow pace of improving accessibility in public transport systems does not seem to affect the use of specialised transport for persons with disabilities. Moreover, if more and more pupils with disabilities attend mainstream regular schools, the number of students with disabilities in special schools does not decrease, at least, in in some countries. Sometimes considered as contradictory or ambivalent, the connections between protective measures and anti-discrimination measures would benefit from being analysed through the ways in which they can be combined to promote emancipation against all forms of oppression, whether they originate from social protection or from activation measures. The challenge lies in the reappropriation of social protection as defined by democratic and therefore participatory, non-hierarchical and therefore non-oppressive objectives (Fraser, 2017).

Scope. Traditionally associated with public policies, social protection measures go far beyond this arena to be embodied through a variety of devices and instruments. They can result from State interventions and institutions (e.g. the administrative recognition of a need for protection of persons with disabilities), or from communal and informal solidarities (the everyday support

provided by caregivers); they can be material (financial compensations); symbolic (identity resources), or relational (belonging to a community), individual or group-related. Social protection measures can also take place at different levels: at the local level (where one lives or in the family), in the private as well as in the public sphere, and in all areas of life. Whatever the forms of protection that will be at focus, the conference presentations will examine how they promote or hinder autonomy, human rights, inclusion, emancipation, and so on.

From this point of view, the 11th *Alter* conference seeks contributions that address, from a theoretical or empirical perspective, one or more of the following research axes, though not exclusively:

1. Concepts and issues

This axis includes any theoretical or empirical analysis that sheds light on the ways of combining the notions of protection, human rights and emancipation with other related ones, such as those of inclusion, autonomy, participation, self-determination, needs, care, oppression... These analyses can combine different levels and tools (e.g. international treaties, European directives, national policies, state interventions, families and local groups...)

2. Variation throughout history and across geographical contexts

This axis includes any socio-historical and/or comparative analysis of the possible combinations between protection measures and human rights for persons with disabilities, their transformation and their effects, promoting or hindering their emancipation.

3. Towards emancipatory forms of protection

This axis includes analyses of existing systems that relate to different domains of people's lives (education, work, housing, health, family, parenthood, sexuality, leisure, etc.), likely to reveal the dynamics between protection measures and rights / protection measures and activation policies favouring or hindering their emancipation, and to understand the dynamics and the conditions of their realization.

4. The risks of new forms of alienation.

This axis includes work on the paradoxical consequences of new emancipatory policies such as increased used of coercive measures, whether at civil (guardianship/curatorship), health (forced treatment) or criminal level (increased incarceration rate and increased number of persons with disabilities in jails).

5. Participatory and emancipatory research

This axis includes research that carries within it an emancipatory aim for people with disabilities, as actors in the research process, aimed at problematizing the very question of their emancipation through experimentation and collective mobilizations, various forms of artistic production... which can, if necessary, be located at the crossroads of struggles, in an intersectional perspective.

Submission. Proposals must be submitted no later than **January 22, 2023** on the *Alter* conference website. To submit, it is required to create an account on the Sciencesconf platform if you do not already have one: <https://alterconf2023.sciencesconf.org/>

Proposals can be introduced *individually* (20 min.), or *as a group* in the form of a joint session with three to four presentations (20 min. per presentation). In the latter case, a presentation of the session is required in addition to the abstracts of the papers themselves. Proposals can be written in English, or French according to the following guidelines:

- Title of the paper or session;
 - *For an individual submission*: an abstract of maximum 3500 characters (spaces included) stating the originality, the problematic, the methods and results (depending on the practices of the discipline) and an indicative bibliography.
 - *For a joint session proposal*: an argument in support of the session proposal of maximum 3500 characters (spaces included), specifying the names and institutional affiliations of the authors of the session, and the titles of their papers. A file with abstracts for each paper of the session, following the same guideline as proposals for *individual submissions*, must be attached.
- The theme of the paper (see above)
- The language chosen for the paper or session (English, French, International Sign, French Sign Language).

Decisions of the Scientific Committees will be notified **at the end of February 2023**, on the understanding that by submitting a proposal for a paper or a session, the author or the person in charge commits to attend the conference if their proposal is accepted.

Indicative references

- Bonvin, J.-M. (2008) Activation policies, new modes of governance and the issue of responsibility. *Social Policy and Society*, 23, 323-339. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijsw.12088>
- Fraser, N. (2017). A Triple Movement? Parsing the Politics of Crisis after Polanyi. In: Burchardt, M., Kirn, G. (eds) *Beyond Neoliberalism. Approaches to Social Inequality and Difference*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-45590-7_3
- Jean-Louis Genard, « Une réflexion sur l'anthropologie de la fragilité, de la vulnérabilité et de la souffrance », in Thomas Périlleux *et al.*, *Destins politiques de la souffrance*, ERES « Sociologie clinique », 2009, p. 27-45. DOI 10.3917/eres.peril.2009.01.0027
- Waddington, L., & Diller, M. (2002). Tensions and coherence in disability policy: The uneasy relationship between social welfare and civil rights models of disability in American, European and international employment law. <https://dredf.org/news/publications/disability-rights-law-and-policy/tensions-and-coherence-in-disability-policy/>