
SESSION(3) - Who Counts as Having a Disability?

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Résumé

The proposed panel will focus on processes of disability categorization and identification deployed by state and other institutions to draw boundary around who counts as having a disability and who is left out. In doing so, it asks: what are the ways in which the category of disability is produced by the state and governments for the purposes of measuring disability prevalence and inequalities and for determining eligibility for services and inclusion into labor market? What are the limits and limitations of these dominant practices being used globally? The panel will explore these processes of inclusion and exclusion from various theoretical and empirical perspectives and will shed light on what is at stake for disabled people and for the category of disability itself.

Taken together, the four papers bring out the complexity of who counts as having a disability, and how disability is counted and discounted in various domains. While Vandana's work critically delves into theoretical and ideological underpinnings of how disability is ascertained for inclusion into social protection programs, Anne and Célia's work similarly highlights the problematics of category-based employment quota system in France. These questions of who is disabled are further problematized in Sophie's work, which unsettles the binary frameworks of categorizing disability and non-disability in international disability statistics. Finally, Minerva's work throws light on the glaring absence of disability questions from data apparatuses, such as the national surveys and population censuses, resulting in disability data vacuum impacting the very category of disability.

1) Vandana Chaudhry explores the biopolitical processes states employ to draw the boundaries around the category of disability to determine eligibility for benefits and social protection. Critically analyzing globally prevalent medical, quantifiable and digital disability assessment systems, the presentation highlights gaps in how disability gets counted, and what is at stake for disability community and for the category of disability itself.

2) Minerva Rivas reports on an analysis of disability questions in national surveys and population censuses from 2009 to 2022 in 185 countries. This study informs whether Article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) requiring States Parties to "collect appropriate information, including statistical and research data, to enable them to formulate and implement policies to give effect to the present Convention" is being implemented.

3) Anne Revillard and Célia Bouchet highlight the importance of holding together issues of identities (assigned and self-assigned) and discrimination (direct or indirect) to study the problematics of the categorization processes within quota-based disability employment policies, as experienced by disabled people in France.

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