
Trapped in the Support System: Between Apparent Protection and Systemic Exclusion. The Struggle for Autonomy and a Dignified Life for Parents and Caregivers of People With Disabilities in Poland.

Jolanta Rzeznicka-Krupa*¹

¹University of Gdansk, Interdisciplinary Disability Studies and Research Methodology Lab, Faculty of Social Sciences – Poland

Abstract

Introduction:

After the political transformation of 1989 and the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN 2006) in 2012, the objectives of social policy implemented in Poland focus on activities related to counteracting discrimination and exclusion, as well as strengthening social inclusion of people with disabilities. One of the important areas of social policy is building support systems to facilitate independent living and participation in society. However, the proposed solutions and the current law in Poland give rise to certain paradoxes and pitfalls. Instead of support, they actually limit the activity and strengthen the dependence of people with disabilities and their families, leading to the phenomenon like perverse effect” which R. Boudon understood as unintended consequences of social action (1987). Caregivers, most often mothers, who want to take advantage of financial support unintentionally fall into a trap that ties them up for a long time in the role of caretakers. So in fact, instead of more autonomy and dignity, some solutions contribute to the growth of economic poverty and social discrimination of caregivers of children and adults with disabilities who require constant support in their daily lives. These negative effects primarily affect women and lead to their systemic discrimination and exclusion at the labour market.

The aim of research:

The proposed talk will present a study of the public discourse surrounding the recent protest of people with disabilities and their allies (called Protest 2119), which took place in 2022 in Poland. The aim of the research was to analyze and reconstruct both the protest itself (its origins, the demands formulated and the people involved), as well as its social reception and the public discourse accompanying the protest.

Methodology:

The primary method of the research was discourse analysis (Meyer, Wodak 2015, Johnstone 2017), understood as a broader research strategy used also within the disability research (Grue 2015). Gathering data included qualitative desk-based research (Bassot 2022) and analysis of audiovisual materials (Banks 2007). Data came from various types of publicly

*Speaker

available online sources (newspaper articles, news portals, social media, et cetera).

Results:

The reconstruction of public discourse will be presented within the background of previous protests and the emerging social movement of disability communities in Poland over the past decade, fighting for the realization of civil rights in various areas of life. The extracted aspects of public discourse will allow not only to identify the paradoxes and pitfalls of apparent support in the intersectional perspective, but also to grasp the action strategies and emancipatory potential of disability communities involved in protests.

References:

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