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Empowerment and Self-Determination of People with Disabilities: History of a New Social Movement

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De l'appropriation du pouvoir et de l'autodétermination : le parcours
du mouvement social des personnes ayant des incapacités
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Editorial

Empowerment and Self-Determination of People with Disabilities : History of a New Social Movement

The appearance of the socio-political emancipation movement began in the 1970's with the political actions of groups like the Independent Living in the United States. Since, the forms and types of actions of the disability rights movement have undergone many transformations. In terms of research support for the community of people with disabilities, associations have gradually turned to a better understanding of the general and specific needs of their members by the institutions present in their companies. A situation which was accompanied by a strong critical current causing mutation in institutional and social regulation practices of people with disabilities' situation. Such transformations have contributed to the definition of people with disabilities' integration issues within the changing welfare state. The recent evolution of occidental democracies, toward a respectful "pluralism" of differences and the recognition of equal opportunities as a basis for pursuing citizenship, creates new opportunities and challenges for associations inspired by the values and philosophy related to exercising independent living in order to promote freedom of choice and autonomy for its members.

The present era questions the notions of user's empowerment and control and the nature of their impact on the planning, supply and management of services to citizens, and this, in all areas affected by disability. It also implies a renegotiation of the terms with regards to the rights of people with disabilities, which affects the aspects of identity related to diversity contributory to the thickness of the humanitarian web. From a sociological perspective, the understanding of the relationship between the individual, seized in its singularity, and society, in turn seized in its complexity, is fertile ground

for any social analyst. It is precisely in this direction that the present issue heads, the authors cover a variety of realities that each contributes to a better understanding of the social practices with regards to considering difference. This diversity is expressed in the terminology used by the authors, some of which are moving away from that promoted by the Network. In this regard, it should be noted that the notion of disability put forth conceives it as the result of the relationship between the individual and his environment and in doing so, perhaps not in any way solely attributable to the characteristics of the person.

The first articles in this issue pertain to roles that research projects may take in the empowerment of individuals. Tremblay first introduces the reader to the importance of the acquisition and development of civic skills in advocating for people with disabilities. The article presents the contribution of the "International Education Program for democratic citizenship, by, for and with people with disabilities" for the exercise of full citizenship. The article by Boucher et al. follows the tradition. It discusses the goals of the *Disability Research Promotion International* (DRPI) and its willingness to document the exercise of human rights from the personal experiences of people with disabilities. This article presents the results of some of the interviews conducted in Quebec City and Toronto (Canada) and compares the perceptions of access, control and use of home support services in the two cities. Finally, the Grech and Goodley's article questions the dominance of Western scholars and their methodological research in *Disability Studies*. So as to encourage empowerment and self-determination people with disabilities around the world, the authors propose that researchers adopt a decolonizing position and techniques in order to promote an understanding of disability in light of globalization.

The following articles focus on best practices for implementing the notion of empowerment in communities and service organizations for people with disabilities. Hendrick's text explores different ways for users to participate in decision-making within the organizations from

whom they purchase services and how they can be put into practice in daily management. It also presents the different levels of involvement possible for users within such organizations. Meanwhile, Munsaka's article focuses on the involvement of disabled persons, particularly those who are deaf, in the planning, management and monitoring of programs to reduce risks of HIV / AIDS in the district of Binga in Zimbabwe.

The third section of this issue regroups off-topic several articles. The first text, by Johner, compares the social isolation of single mothers with disabilities compared to those who have none. The author notes that access to a decent income and necessary services enable them to get involved in meaningful social relationships. Tchrikov's article focuses on livelihood strategies preferred by people with disabilities living in the lower limbs, living in Conakry, Guinea. It presents the factors leading them to carry out a task, take care of the house as the first occupation or beg in the streets. An article by Beaton and Kabano on people with disabilities' social representations of the labor market follows. They also explore the perceived barriers in hiring and maintaining employment of people with disabilities. The last article in this issue focuses on the opportunities and challenges for Swedish men and women, aged 65 to 72 with physical disabilities in the pursuit of an active lifestyle. Taghizadeh and Larsson comment on the technical changes, social and political, observed in recent years and discuss their impact on the lives of these people.

Normand Boucher
Guest Editor

