“Not to be governed in this way...”

Theoretical and methodological perspectives of ‘Critical Ableism Studies’: Assemblages of Neo-Liberalism and lines of flight
Marianne Pieper / Jamal Haji Mohammadi

In the framework of ‘Critical Ableism Studies” and “Critical Occidentalism Studies” on the one hand we aim to discuss the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination concerning dis/ability, ethnicity, age, class and gender in the period of the Neo-Liberal project and its global economic transformation processes. On the other hand it might be misleading to examine dis/ability and the other forms of discrimination exclusively in terms of exclusion, viewing actors simply as victims in the regime of ableism, occidentalism, and neo-liberalism.

Current modes of ableism and racist practices are defined not only by binary differentiation and processes of exclusion but primarily through processes of limited inclusion due to the biopolitical strategies of the neo-liberal project in the North-Atlantic societies.

Based on findings of our EU-project on “Participation of multiple discriminated people” >>www.wiso.uni-hamburg.de/cepar<< we propose the theoretical and methodological perspective of “assemblage” in the sense of Deleuze’s/Guattari’s “agencement”. With this term we aim to investigate the intermingling of ableistic, occidentalistic, and economic power relations and strategies of the regime of Neo-Liberal governmentality with bodies, discourses, affects, and a multiplicity of human and non-human actors. In this meaning assemblage functions as an emergent and contingent versatile fabrics of rhizomatic becoming where new lines of flight can appear.

Investigations should not, however, stop at a description of the restrictive nature of regimes and their immanent contradictions and by determining the dominant ‘interpellation’ of a ‘symbolic order’. We cannot start from the assumption that subjects merely reflect the ‘relations’, that they are exclusively their ‘victims’. That would be to ignore that the processes establishing subjectivity within these “assemblages” are a social field of conflict in which micro-politics and the desire for other, better life projects express themselves.