In 1983 the first research on the situation of disabled women in Germany was published, albeit by a relatively unknown author. This was a significant moment in the history of the German Disability Rights Movement, as it was one of the early products of German Disability Studies. The research focused on the double discrimination faced by disabled women, emphasizing the need for equalization and self-determination.

Critics argued that the usage of the term “disabled women” was problematic, as it supposedly led to the perception of disabled women as objects. However, there were also those who saw the usage of the term as a way to empower themselves and fight against their oppressors.

The Struggle for Legal Equalization

In the 1980s, the movement for legal equalization gained momentum. This was a time when new campaigns for the legalization of assisted suicide were underway. The “destruction of life unworthy to live” was a central issue in the movement. The “right to life of severely disabled newborns” was a contentious issue, and it led to the cancellation of John Singer’s “The Right to Life of Severely Disabled Newborns” by the biggest German organization for cognitively disabled people.

Recently, the movement has lost a bit of its “punch.” When, in 2004, Singer was once more invited to present his book, the movement was no longer as active. The roots of the movement go back even to pre-Nazi times, and the continuity was evident in the fight against the denial of disabled people’s rights.

Legal project: anti-discrimination

In the summer of 1986, a few activists visited the United States to learn about their disabled community’s approach to legal projects. This visit was an early product of German Disability Studies. The activists proved continuities in the self-determined living context, establishing Centers for Independent Living in five German cities. However, the plans to inform disabled people about their rights and to establish a network of centers and organizations did not materialize.

The movement continued, and in 1989, in response to the cancellation of Singer’s book, the movement worked towards legal projects to support disabled people’s right to life.

Legalization of assisted suicide

The movement’s struggle for legalization of assisted suicide was significant. The “destruction of life unworthy to live” had not been achieved, but the movement continued to work towards it. The movement’s determination was evident in the fight for legal projects, even in the face of discrimination.

The movement’s success was in the awareness of the fact that men and women experience disability differently, as committed to paper in the continuing story of success.

Critical of the usage of the term

Many in the movement criticized the usage of the term “disabled women” because it supposedly led to the perception of disabled women as objects. There were also those who saw the usage of the term as a way to empower themselves and fight against their oppressors. Let’s learn from the women, let us join them in the editorial representation of disabled people. Depending on the specific groups and people involved as well as the context, counseling — so eugenics was still an integral part of the life of disabled people. Prenatal diagnostics and selective abortion were central to the movement. The “destruction of life unworthy to live” had not been achieved, but the movement continued to work towards it.

The movement’s determination was evident in the fight for legal projects, even in the face of discrimination. The movement’s critical of the usage of the term was evident in the fight for legal projects, even in the face of discrimination.

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