



Maison <sup>DES</sup>  
Sciences  
de l'Homme  
EN Bretagne



# Call for papers for the EXPAIRs conference

## Peer support: contemporary issues Health, Disability, Mental Health

Organized by the ESO laboratory (UMR 6590), the VIPS2 laboratory, the Rennes University and the MSHB (Human Sciences Institute in Brittany)

Rennes, France, 14-15 November 2019

### Arguments and objectives of the conference

Since the 1990s, the French field of public action has been marked by the spread of what L. Blondiaux has called "a participatory imperative" (Blondiaux, 2008). In many public policy sectors, "institutional arrangements have emerged, formally implemented by public authorities at all levels, with the aim of involving all or part of the public in an exchange of the highest possible quality, in order to make them stakeholders in the decision-making process in a given sector of public action" (Gourgues, 2013: 13). While all of these mechanisms aim to reduce the "double delegational disconnect" between representatives and represented on the one hand and experts and lay people on the other (Callon, Lascoumes, Barthe, 2001), their mechanisms (Fung, 2006) vary widely, both in terms of how to define or select the audience to participate (appointment of representatives, lotto, self-selection, etc.) and in terms of the way in which they are used., the way in which debates and the process of producing a collective opinion are organized (deliberation or negotiation?), and finally, according to S. Arnstein (1969), the stronger or weaker effect on the final decision (simple consultation or real delegation of power to the citizen?). These participatory mechanisms are diverse in their modalities, but also in their objectives: the implementation of participation can be a response to managerial challenges (improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the public service by encouraging listening to the user-consumer) but also political (reenchantment of a representative system that is heavily criticized) or social (strengthening social cohesion).

Public policies in the health, social and medico-social sectors are no exception to the rule and have largely taken up this participatory option since the 2000s. The law from January 2, 2002 on the renovation of social and medico-social action introduced the participation of people in their personalized project, also at the level of institutions and services with



the creation of Social Life Councils or the satisfaction survey. The law from March 4, 2002 on patient rights and the quality of the health system established a regulatory framework to facilitate the development of voluntary work in health care institutions, promoted the participation of approved associations of patients and users of the health system in various health-related bodies, and strengthened the role of user representatives on the boards of public health care institutions.

Since the 2010's, this participatory orientation has taken a new turn with the introduction of peers into a set of public policies. The peer refers to a type of actor newly recognized and legitimized by the public authorities in the name of their experiential knowledge: experience of life on the street, experience of chronic disease, experience of addictions, experience of disability, etc. Some are peer advocates, others teachers or trainers, others peer supporters or peer counselors. It is the latter that are the focus of this conference.

Peers are recruited from the multi-professional teams of Housing First public policy for homeless people. Others are asked to participate in the Accompanied Response For All policy concerning people with disabilities, people living with chronic illness or mental health problems and their families. Still others are expected to break the loneliness and co-construct solidary and reciprocal relationships within Mutual Aid Groups. Some are enrolled in health or even public health facilities to participate in therapeutic education or health prevention programs, etc.

As a result of this obvious interest in contemporary French public policies for peers, the practices of peer support, their contexts and statutes are multiplying. While they are fundamental characteristics of peer relationships, symmetry and reciprocity are sometimes even lost sight of. This is not without questioning the issues underlying this participation.

Is it the development of the peer support function or the deployment of public policies that is privileged (Gardien, Laval, 2018)? Is it a desire to democratize targeted sectors of activity and improve public policies, or, conversely, is it the ambition to encourage peers to support public policies through their participation? Is it about recognizing the experiential knowledge of peers and their potential contribution to our society? Or is it a new form of citizen activation? Is the purpose of this peer participation to expand the possibilities for support? Is it a call to lay people to limit public spending? Does peer participation aim to make the populations targeted by public policies more challenging? Or is it standardization and inclusion of peer leaders through ad hoc training and professionalization?

It will be a question of not making false trials of peers-supporters in relation to the contemporary socio-political context. Why?

First of all, because the organization and implementation of peer support relationships predate this expression of interest by French public policy (Gardien, 2017). Many collectives and individuals have engaged in peer support relationships on their own initiative, without any particular link to public policy mechanisms. Alcoholics Anonymous

is a good example, as are some Para sports clubs, various patient associations, and some self-managed groups.

Second, because "taking part in" is not the same as "being part of" (Zask, 2011). In other words, we must distinguish several possible postures of the peer: participating on one's own initiative in a collective action that makes sense for oneself (Sen, 2010); assuming a social role within the framework of a public policy system designed and organized by others; accepting a form of injunction to participation; aiming for the individual and collective emancipation of oneself and one's peers, and consequently the transformation of the social order (radical model according to Bacqué, Biewener, 2013).

Thirdly, because context effects undeniably modify the effects of individual and/or collective actions carried out by peers. They can participate in a public action where multiple supports and enablers are provided and organized by the State and other stakeholders with a view to achieving greater social justice: mechanisms to compensate for unequal opportunities, to overcome difficulties in accessing certain scarce resources, to reduce the lack of effectiveness of certain rights, etc. (liberal model). Peers can also participate in an environment where everyone must be the "entrepreneur of their own existence", where participation is a matter of individual injunction and public policies of activation (neoliberal model) (Bacqué, Biewener, 2013). Self-management is yet another relationship to the political and institutional environment.

This conference aims at examining the issues underlying these multiple practical forms of peer participation in the health, social and medico-social sectors as well as self-managed organizations. Its objective is to discern, define and qualify them, and to clarify their practical consequences. International case studies are also expected.

## **Proposed areas of work**

The communications and exchanges during this conference will be based on one or more of the following areas of work:

1. The actors and their interactions: accompanying and/or accompanied peers, professionals from the relevant sectors of activity, close relations, institutions and politicians;
2. Environments: facilitators and/or obstacles, resources or shortages, in terms of public policy, public action, organization, partnerships and collaborations, etc.
3. The aims and practical effects of peer participation
4. Recognition: of the specificity of the peer relationship, support and accompaniment practices, aspirations, capacities, disabilities and skills, identities; the concrete and symbolic consequences of this recognition (training, status, remuneration, consideration, etc.).

## **A list of topics of interest to the EXPAIRs program is proposed here:**

- Peer support and technical aids: knowledge, practices and issues.
- The effects of information and communication technologies in the context of peer support activities.
- Self-determination and/or compliance at the heart of peer support practices.
- Peer support: new experiences and new constructions of the boundaries delimiting intimate, private, collective, public, personal and professional sides of life?
- Professionalization and training of peer-supporters.
- Volunteering, salaried employment, consulting, temporary work, informal practice: what status for which peer support practices?
- The training of professionals, peers and their relatives.
- Forms, practices and challenges of peer support in the field of adapted physical activities.
- Peer supporters in public policy: recognition, enrolment, activation or free choice?
- Are peers a reflection of inequalities in participation? Who are the committed peers? Who is participating?
- Gender relationship and its effects on peer support.
- Evaluation of the effects of peer support.
- Peer support: what are the challenges for professionals in the fields concerned?
- Social innovations developed within the framework of peer support: organizations, practices, resources.

This list of themes is not exhaustive. Other proposals will be studied with interest by the scientific committee of the conference.

## **Instructions for sending communication proposals**

The proposals for communication must include: a title, an abstract (maximum 3,000 characters) and a possible proposal to link to one of the proposed workshop topics. The abstract must include a detailed description of your presentation (subject covered, type of data used, analysis, results and main bibliographic references).

Video presentations are only accepted in exceptional cases.

Proposals for papers can be submitted on the website dedicated to the conference:  
<https://expairsenjeux.sciencesconf.org/>

no later than June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

## Calendar of events

June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019: deadline for online submission of communications

Mid July 2019: notifications sent to participants

September 2019: distribution of the full program of the conference

November 14-15, 2019: EXPAIRs conference

## Date, place, registration details

The EXPAIRs conference will take place on November 14 and 15, 2019 in Rennes.

Registration will be open in April. It can be done online at the following address:

<https://expairsenjeux.sciencesconf.org/>

## Organizing Committee

Gildas Bregain (Historian, CNRS Research Fellow, EHESP), Julien Cazal (STAPS, Senior Lecturer, Rennes University), Aurélie Damamme (Sociologist, Senior Lecturer, University of Paris 8), Eve Gardien (Sociologist, Senior Lecturer, Rennes University), Paul-Fabien Groud, (Anthropologist, PhD candidate, University of Lyon - CNRS), Stéphane Héas (STAPS, HDR Senior Lecturer, Rennes University), Pascal Jarno (Public Health Physician, Associate Researcher, ESO-Rennes), Christine Lamberts (Geographer, Research Engineer, University of Nantes), Delphine Moreau (Sociologist, Professor-Researcher, EHESP), Christian Laval (Sociologist, Associate Researcher, ESO-Rennes), Marie Schnitzler (Sociologist, Post-doctoral Fellow, Mons University)

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