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FIGHTING SHADOWS? THE CONCEPT AND EMERGENCE OF ABLEISM IN SOCIETY AND AT THE WORPLACE

ÁRNYÉKHARC? AZ ÉPSÉGIZMUS FOGALMA ÉS MEGJELENÉSE A TÁRSADALOMBAN ÉS A MUNKAHELYEN

Ableism is both an ideology and a belief system that privileges ableness and normality considering disability as a lower form of human existence and rendering people with disabilities invisible. Based on a literature summary, the current paper intends to describe the concept and roots of ableism and to show how it is manifested in society and the labour market as well as within the individual. It also introduces some research that uses ableism as an analytical tool to address issues of marginalisation and discrimination. The results provide insight into the broad and complex ways in which ableism can influence and constrain the opportunities of people with disabilities and their responses to social challenges. The paper aims not only to raise awareness of ableism as a potential form of oppression for interested academic researchers, university students, and diversity practitioners, but also to encourage them to conduct further research and identify ways of eliminating it.

Keywords: **ableism, people with disabilities, labour market**

Az épségizmus egy olyan hiedelemrendszer és ideológia, amely a normalitást és az épséget részesíti előnyben, a fogyatékosságot az emberi lét alacsonyabb értékű formájának tekinti, és a fogyatékossággal élő embereket marginalizálja. Jelen szakirodalmi összefoglaló cikk célja, hogy bemutassa az épségizmus fogalmát és gyökereit, valamint azt, hogy miként jelenik meg ez az ideológia a társadalomban és a munkaerőpiacon. A szerzők írásukkal betekintést szeretnének nyújtani abba, hogy az épségizmus milyen összetett módon befolyásolhatja és korlátozhatja a fogyatékossággal élő emberek lehetőségeit, a társadalomban és a gazdaságban való részvételét. A tanulmány célja egyik oldalról az, hogy felhívja az érdeklődő kutatók, egyetemi hallgatók és a diverzitással foglalkozó szakemberek figyelmét az épségizmusra, mint az elnyomás lehetséges formájára, másik oldalról az, hogy az olvasókat további kutatásokra és a jelenlegi helyzet megváltoztatására ösztönözze.

Kulcsszavak: **épségizmus, fogyatékossággal élő emberek, munkaerőpiac**

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The focus of considering and researching the situation of people with disabilities (PWD) has recently shifted from disability itself to exploring the attitudes and behaviour of mainstream society (Calder-Dawe et al., 2020). In parallel with the spread of the social model of disability that emphasises the responsibility of society in creating barriers (Barnes & Mercer, 2005; Győri & Csillag, 2019a; Oliver, 1995), there has been a growing awareness of the various forms of social oppression that PWD face: discriminative social practices, unfavourable discourses, and institutional oppressive mechanisms that continue to marginalise and keep PWD passive, vulnerable and dependent (Csillag et al., 2018). The concept of ableism – like the notions of sexism, racism, or antisemitism – is increasingly understood as disability oppression based on the socially constructed norms of ableness as value, operating on many levels (e.g., institutional policy and practice, cultural norms and representations, individual beliefs and behaviours). As ableism is generally invisible, it transcends everyday life, which makes any form of counteraction difficult: like fighting shadows.

In this paper, after presenting the method of the literature review conducted, we discuss the concept of ableism and its origins, then we present its manifestations on individual, social and labour market levels addressing possibilities of counteraction as well. Our explorative research question is how ableism as a concept manifests itself in the scientific literature. In Hungary, several research communities are actively engaged in studying the social and labour market participation of PWD (e.g., Balázs-Földi & Dajnoki, 2016; Cseh, 2014; Csillag et al., 2018; Dajnoki, 2012; Hidegh & Csillag, 2013; Koller, 2020; Könczei & Hernádi, 2015; Szellő & Cseh, 2018; Zádori & Nemeskéri, 2019). Still, there is very little research on or applying the framework of ableism in management and organization studies. Our aim is to provide a summary for students, researchers and professionals working in the field of disability, and to encourage interested readers to further reflect, research and raise questions concerning the issue at hand.

The process of collecting the literature

In order to explore the concept and phenomenon of ableism, a systematic literature review (Denyer et al., 2009) was carried out using the Scopus database. We chose Scopus because our initial, exploratory searches in other available databases (EBSCO, JSTOR, Emerald) yielded significantly fewer hits. We illustrate the literature search process in Figure 1.

The database was first searched for the co-occurrence of the variations of ableism ("ableism" or "ableist") and disability ("disability" or "disabled"), thus the first round of searches yielded 291 results. We narrowed this down to scientific articles published in English between 2000 and 2019. The 256 hits were not further narrowed down to subject areas, so the background of the articles was very diverse (the most common areas were Education Research 63, Rehabilitation 58, Psychology 55, and Sociology 40

articles, respectively). More than three-quarters of the articles (199 articles) were from the USA, Canada, and the UK. The distribution of articles over time shows that more than half (143 articles) were published between 2017 and 2019, i.e., interest in the topic has been growing extensively. Among the journals, Disability and Society (36 articles) and the Journal of Social Issues stand out – the latter also published a special issue focusing specifically on ableism in 2019. We illustrate the diversity of articles in the online Appendix (Figures 2-5).

By reading through the abstracts, we next filtered out articles that did not discuss disability in general but focused on a specific impairment (e.g., autism or spinal cord injuries), or on specific life situations (e.g., childhood, migration, legal cases). The remaining studies included in the analysis treat the notion of ableism as a central theme, most of them originate from the social sciences, behavioural sciences, or psychology. The articles were processed partly deductively, along with predefined aspects (e.g., concept and its origins, labour market presence), and partly inductively, along themes that emerged during reading (e.g., coping, internalised ableism, othering). In the present paper we wish to summarise the findings of the 93 relevant articles found along four lines: the concept and origins of ableism, its manifestations, resistance and coping, and ableism at work.

Figure 1

Process of the collection of the literature
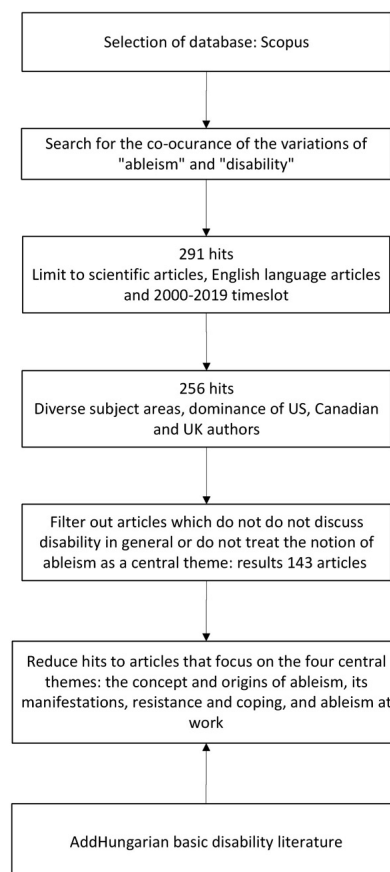
Source: own edition based on Scopus results

The concept and origins of ableism

The notion of ableism has its origins in the human rights movement of the USA (Campbell, 2014), and much of the related theoretical and empirical work is rooted in Disability Studies, an academic discipline that has evolved around disability as a social, cultural, economic, and political phenomenon (Bogart & Dunn, 2019; Campbell, 2008; Wolbring, 2012). According to its most widely accepted definition, ableism is *"a network of beliefs, processes and practices that produces a particular kind of self and body (the corporeal standard) that is projected as the perfect, species-typical, and therefore essential and fully human. Disability then is cast as a diminished state of being human."* (Campbell, 2009, p. 5) The definition itself is based on the idea that disability is socially constructed, that is, the physical condition or impairment itself is only partially relevant, and it is mainly the disabling practices of society that cause disability and a narrow understanding of ability (Nario-Redmond, 2020; Thomas, 2004). As a normative ideology and belief system that privileges the able-body and ableness over disability, ableism has also become an analytical tool and framework for analysing the functioning and persistence of this system of preferences and reveal the systematic marginalisation and exclusion of PWD from social life (Hutcheon & Wolbring, 2013; Jammaers et al., 2019).

The basic assumption behind ableism is that disability is ontologically negative (Hughes, 2007). The disabled body is seen as abnormal, which therefore needs to be corrected or cured (Oliver, 1995). Considering PWD as sub-human and inferior legitimizes the existing status-quo and justifies their segregation and oppression (Branco et al., 2019). A fundamental feature of ableism is that it is a binary system in which people are classified by their visible or publicly acknowledged impairments into artificially constructed and maintained categories, such as able-bodied or disabled (Campbell, 2009). Ableism refers to a 'constitutional divide' involving a separation of the notion of the normative 'human' person from the 'aberrant', referring to beings as 'subhuman' (Rieck et al., 2019). Although attempts have been made to have a continuum of abilities accepted (Rocco, 2005), the disabled/non-disabled dichotomy has persistently contributed to the hierarchy between PWD and non-disabled people, the dominance of the latter and the oppression of the former (Jammaers et al., 2019).

In an ableist social hierarchy and power structure, the 'able body' becomes the benchmark against which the person with disabilities can only become 'the other'. Othering is the phenomenon of differentiating oneself from 'others', constructing a positive self-identity *"through what it is not"* (O'Mahoney, 2012, p. 729), building anti-identities, or engaging in dis-identification (Alvesson et al., 2008). Various groups can be 'othered' based on social characteristics like gender, age, sexual orientation, or even weight. Othering affects PWD seriously, as they are labelled and sometimes even stigmatized as outsiders, not fitting within the norms of non-disabled people as a social group (Mik-Meyer, 2016). Othering also draws attention to the discursive levels of disability: disability may not only be interpreted as a condition but also as a material and discursive phenomenon that repeatedly appears in social processes (Mik-Meyer, 2016). Focusing on how ableism nurtures othering allows a way to see the intricate machinery behind societal prejudice and stigma (Dosch, 2019). Othering can also be a source of resistance, supporting the development of counter-narratives against hegemonic discourses (O'Mahoney, 2012) such as ableism or masculinity.

Forms and variations of ableism

According to feminist disability studies, ableism is the most dominant disability narrative in Western societies (Tarvainen, 2019). Ableism is often invisible (like a shadow), difficult to identify, and ableist principles are often not consciously reproduced in everyday life and in the functioning of institutions. Ableism in fact is just as present in culture and art as it is in inaccessible transport, discriminatory corporate recruitment practices or disability-based violence. It covers a wide range of acts from 'innocent' comments (microaggression) (Sue, 2010) to euthanasia programmes or selective abortion (Gent, 2011). Its validity is not in question, despite the fact that the condition of ableness is in a sense only temporary, and we are all 'temporarily able-bodied'. As bodily functions may decline with age, physical limitations may be experienced sooner or later by all who live long enough (McRuer, 2006).

There are different categorisations of ableism depending on the various conceptualisations or models of disability and the disciplinary backgrounds of the given approach. While Wolbring (2008, p. 253) distinguishes among four areas of ableism (biological structure-based ableism, cognitive-based ableism, social structure-based ableism, and economic system-based ableism), Chouinard (1997) stresses that ableism is simultaneously present at several levels, in systems of ideas, institutional practices and social relations. Compared to the more obvious and visible disadvantages at the social level, it is often difficult to pinpoint the more indirect, discursive, or interpersonal discriminatory forms of ableism. Research and initiatives focusing on the socio-cultural barriers of disability have, according to Critical Disability Studies, taken little account so far of the personal and psycho-emotional dimensions (Reeve, 2002, 2004). As Thomas (2007, p. 72) formulates, "*social barriers 'out there' certainly place limits on what disabled people can do, but psycho-emotional disablism places limits on who they can be by shaping individuals' 'inner worlds', sense of 'self' and social behaviours*".

In case macro and micro levels of ableism are regarded, it is reasonable to distinguish between structural-public and individual, psycho-emotional forms (Sanmiquel-Molinero & Pujol-Tarrés, 2020). Structural-public ableism is embodied in political, economic, and social systems whose mechanisms systematically disadvantage all who do not qualify as able-bodied. Nario-Redmond (2020),

examining US data, shows that this oppression is present in virtually all areas of social life: most obviously in education, employment, and health care, but the negative effects spill over into areas such as political participation, relationships, or parenting. Psycho-emotional ableism or the psychological dimensions of disability oppression may have direct or indirect forms. Direct forms in interpersonal relationships may include gazing or avoidance, while an example for the indirect form may be the anger and frustration in the individual as a result of unsolved accessibility issues (Reeve, 2002, 2004, 2012). In peer relationships, ableism can manifest as fear, damage of reputation, or dehumanizing acts such as ignoring, objectification, or invasion of privacy (Nario-Redmond et al., 2019).

As another common form of categorisation, Nario-Redmond et al. (2019) distinguish the following three forms of ableism: hostile (negative), benevolent (positive), and ambivalent (mixed). The negative form is well documented and includes phenomena such as shaming, gestures of disgust, hostility and punishment, humiliation, or intimidation, through which the perpetrator seeks to assert his or her own superiority by denying the humanity of others. Features of benevolent ableism include exaggerating the achievements of PWD, admiration for overcoming disadvantages, patronising, and providing unsolicited help.

Ableism most often takes a mixed, ambivalent form, with both positive and negative emotions like paternalistic/ condescending and jealous/envious, and its perception depends on the situation, intentions, needs and personality traits of the participants (Nario-Redmond et al., 2019). For example, while a small and unobtrusive hearing aid may not evoke negative emotions, a highly visible, 'robotic' cochlear implant may cause confusion in someone who has not yet encountered it. Or even though one knows in theory that one should be kind and accepting towards PWD, in the actual situation one may feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, and anxious at the same time.

The Stereotype Content Model, which was developed to describe mixed reactions and behaviours observed in social interactions, predicts and groups the emotions and typical behaviours commonly elicited by a social group based on its status and competitive nature (Fiske et al., 2002; Nario-Redmond et al., 2019). Accordingly, PWD (low status and low competitive status) are associated with warmth but incompetence, like the elderly and housewives who arouse pity, sympathy, and a need to be protected but are also seen as subordinate. The often-mentioned feeling of pity, for example, is an emotional mix of tenderness and anxiety, and can trigger both aloofness and a desire to care, especially if the person is perceived as vulnerable and unable to help their condition. Pity can also include passive neglect (isolation) or ignorance, alongside active caring, as in segregated residential homes or charity fundraising, where PWD are often objectified and exploited for the sake of the cause. However, if PWD do not fit the expected image (e.g., the disability is self-inflicted, or PWD joke about their condition, refuse help or are "too" competent),

the reaction of the majority can quickly turn to blame, contempt or indignation.

Another aspect of ableism, maybe its most dangerous side, is that beside the societal and interpersonal levels, it can impact upon an individual, as a form of internalised ableism. If PWD themselves accept the majority perspective, a secondary or subordinate position, and perceive disability as a problem to be denied, hidden, or overcome (Dosch, 2019), this may cause significant psychological distress. Concealing disability in order to fit in with the majority, avoiding peers so as not to be perceived as similar, or accepting socially assigned ableist roles as 'hero' or 'role model' (Campbell, 2009; Dunn, 2019) can cause psychological distress and may result in anxiety or even depression, n. The terms 'supercrip' (Shakespeare, 1996) or 'inspiration porn' (Grue, 2016) refer to PWD who, while performing everyday activities, are seen as objects of admiration or are fetishized for 'extraordinary' achievements. The media may sensationalise, for example, a child doing sports with a prosthetic leg, a hearing-impaired person speaking foreign languages, or a weightlifter in a wheelchair as something special and, though the phenomenon may seem positive in terms of recognition, it is also paternalistic and condescending because of the apparent low expectations.

If no meaningful action is taken against other forms of ableism, internalised ableism will have a strong impact on the identity and self-image of a PWD: the individual may have a low opinion of themselves and their abilities and potentials, may question their self-worth, consider themselves as outsiders of society and a burden to others, and have little social contact and support network. The constant experience of low self-esteem and feelings of inferiority might even lead to self-hatred and self-destruction (Shakespeare, 1996), a negative spiral or vicious circle that is very difficult to break.

Possible forms of resistance to ableism

Despite the pervasive and permeating nature of the phenomenon of ableism, the possibility of counteraction and resistance, as in all power relations, is there for PWD (Wade, 1997). Their resistance arises from and against power itself as the oppressor and the oppressed are part of the same system, and their struggle is in dynamic interaction (Foucault, 1997). Although oppression is felt at all levels of life and there is strong pressure on individuals to take consequences for granted, even reinforce and reproduce them, there is noticeable and increasingly documented scientific evidence pointing to the various forms of coping strategies PWD might employ (Loja et al., 2013). The following is a summary of the main possible forms of resistance documented in the literature, which aim to go against the norms of ableism and give a new perspective, a vision of equality and a possible partnership between people with and without disabilities that ultimately promotes social justice.

Thematization of resistance to power mainly draws on the concept and definition of oppression. In their stigma

theory, Holley et al. (2012) differentiate between social/cultural/institutional (macro) and individual (micro) levels of oppression. For Critical Disability Studies, the lived experience of marginalised people becomes important in confronting socially constructed normality, challenging dominant ideology by seeing the difference, diversity and marginality as values and a terrain for resistance (Titchkosky & Michalko, 2009). The recognition of ableist norms has also been reflected in the critical revisions of many disciplines, and the need to rethink previously generalised psychological concepts such as 'coping strategies' and 'resilience' has emerged (Hutcheon & Wolbring, 2013).

On a macro level, in socio-political terms, the emergence of the social model of disability (Bailey et al., 2015; Oliver, 2013) itself can be understood as a kind of resistance that developed against the medical model of disability making disability a 'problem' to overcome, fix or erase. Changing the general assumption that disability is inherently negative seems important, as *"in everyday life the negative ontology of disability and the particularities of prejudice and oppression tend to reassert themselves. Moreover, this sociological claim reaffirms the hegemony of the ontological view that human worth is closely associated with ability."* (Hughes, 2007, p. 678) Replacing the former negative ontology and reinforcing a positive self-image has become a central task of human and civil rights movements and identity politics, with the disability community empowered through a shared disability culture, disability pride and the celebration of difference around the world (Loja et al., 2013). The slogan 'Piss on Pity!', also used in political protests, expressively sums up the radical resistance to ableism.

At the level of academic, political, or even practical cooperation, it has become an increasingly important strategy for the disability movement to seek an alliance with social minorities (women, ethnic minorities, or elderly people, etc.) in similarly oppressed situations. On the one hand, this supports learning from each other, and reduces the risk of further social minority isolation. On the other hand, social networks with relatively weak links can benefit from heterogeneity (Langford et al., 2013).

While Critical Disability Studies have moved towards the exploration of multiple identities and intersectionality (Goodley, 2017), a discursive approach to disability has turned its attention to the power role of language. The use of politically correct, respectful language has emerged as an expectation instead of the use of ableist or disrespectful language, and 'person with a disability' as opposed to 'disabled person' has become the new standard term in the context of the USA, following the people-first logic (Svastics, 2019).

Macro-level collective action against ableism is only possible if it derives from individual struggles, micro-resistances. Personal reactions and responses to ableism are highly diverse, depending on situations, as well as the various goals, needs and personalities of individuals. Recognizing and realistically interpreting the devaluing public and interpersonal messages is in itself an achievement, as a fundamental condition of resistance is for the individual to be aware of his/her own oppression (Freire, 2001; Prilleltensky, 2003). McDonald et al. (2007) distinguishes two basic personal strategies of mitigating the negative social impacts of oppressive narratives: the individual either withdraws from the environment (e.g., leaving, leaving the relationship, abandoning the activity) or reframes the dominant cultural narratives. The latter case comprises three options: reducing the validity of the narratives (e.g., self-definition, independent decision making), perceiving disadvantages as motivation (e.g., assertion, confronting low expectations, rejecting labelling), or replacing pejorative narratives with positive, personal manifestations (e.g., positive thinking, self-love). In the case of stigmatized individuals, Bos et al. (2013) differentiate between problem-focused coping (e.g., selective disclosure of disability; compensation in social interactions being particularly outgoing or avoiding others altogether; activism) and emotion-focused strategies (e.g., downward social comparison, ignorance or distraction).

Self-determination, as the exercise of agency and control, plays a significant role for both the individual and the community (Bandura, 2000; Loja et al., 2013). The formerly common 'disability narrative' (Shakespeare, 1996) has been replaced by new narratives, diversifying the palette of possible identities. New strategies for identity management emerged, making intersecting identities and situational identities possible (Könczei & Hernádi, 2015). Furthermore, it has been shown that embracing disability identity as an active resistance to ableism has a number of benefits (e.g., self-esteem, self-efficacy, peer support, and life satisfaction) besides reducing psychological distress (Bogart et al., 2017).

While resistance is always possible, it often comes at a price, which may vary across disability groups (Wang et al., 2019). Despite being risky as it may threaten a person's status and acceptance, countering verbal abuse (i.e. hate speech, microaggression, mocking, etc.) through for example, talking back, writing a complaint, or blogging, is a technique of self-defence and self-expression for which the internet and virtual space can provide sufficient safety (Loja et al., 2013). The negative effects of ableism, which can also be a heavy mental burden because of self-denial or the risk of being 'caught', can be avoided – even if temporarily – through masking or camouflaging (Evans, 2019; Vickers, 2017). Rejection of peers and challenging their self-exoneration and self-justification for the difficulties experienced by those who are successful in mainstream society may also function as self-defence. The aim is usually to defend one's own positive self-image and identity (Watts-Jones, 2002).

The myth of the perfect body, *"the belief that it is possible by means of human actions, to have the bodies we want and to avoid illness, disability, and death"* (Wendell, 1997, p. 9) is oppressive not only to PWD but also to non-disabled people. Although dividing the physical and mental-emotional dimensions of impairment, i.e., disembodiment (Hernádi, 2014), is a documented individual coping strategy, in fortunate cases

it is complemented by social initiatives that challenge existing ideals of beauty or handsome appearance and the existing parameters of the acceptable body. Recognising the existing sexuality associated with PWD, breaking down pervasive stereotypes (e.g., asexual, unattractive, emasculated) and redefining physical normality in socio-cultural terms, e.g., through beauty contests, photo exhibitions, successful role models, and media campaigns are increasingly common solutions that have a significant impact on both public perception and the self-acceptance and positive self-image of the PWD (Barnes, 1992; Lamb, 2001).

Ableism in the labour market and in the world of work

According to ableist norms, the capitalist system has traditionally regarded PWD as less productive and less reliable. In sum, they are considered incapable of meeting the expectations of the economy and are the opposite of the ideal worker who is ready to work and contribute to society, the economy, and creates value (Goodley, 2014). In the globalised neoliberal economy, there is a persistent negative representation that portrays PWD as difficult to employ and unproductive, and thus excludes them from the world of work or forces them into inferior positions. In the work society, work becomes a moral category. Regardless of the actual ability of the individual to work, those unwilling or unable to work, i.e. who do not fit the generally accepted ideals of the workforce, become not only economically and socially but also morally inferior (Blattner, 2020). The notion of 'neoliberal ableism' introduced by Goodley (2014) seeks to draw attention to the mutually reinforcing effects of neoliberalism and ableism, which portrays disabled people as the antithesis of responsible citizens with good work ethics and a desirable, productive labour force.

The concept of the 'inequality regime' is associated with Acker (2006, p. 443), who defines it as *"loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain ... inequalities within particular organizations".* The unequal relations are upheld at the cultural-symbolic level by the image of the ideal worker, who is unencumbered, available to the organisation at all times, prioritises work over private life and is expected to work overtime (Acker, 1990, 2006). The image of the ideal worker is as incompatible with that of a woman who has to care for others as it is with that of PWD, especially when ableist stereotypes are attached. In a workplace based on the rules of the meritocracy game, nothing should be allowed to distract the worker from work. In their research, Jammaers et al. (2019) highlight that human resource management processes based on the image of the ideal worker in a company lead to ableist conditions and, in Bourdieuian terms, to symbolic violence against workers with disabilities.

Ableism in corporate operations can be linked to the concepts of entry and process discrimination (Csillag et al., 2018; Győri & Csillag, 2019b; Jones, 1997). According

to the ableist narrative of recruitment and selection, the disabled candidate is incompetent, needy, and vulnerable, an image that does not coincide with that of the flexible, multitasking, productive and interchangeable ideal candidate. Rocco and Collins (2017) conclude that a candidate with a disability is often perceived as lazy and assumed to be dishonest about their physical or mental condition (Rocco & Collins, 2017). Because (s)he differs from the fixed and idealized image of the perfect employee, a worker with disability would be difficult to fit into the organizational culture or be acceptable to other employees based on the logic of ableism (Jammaers et al., 2016). As a result, many job seekers, where possible, conceal or disguise their disability or the lack of an ability (Vickers, 2017). Physical and digital accessibility can facilitate access to organisations, but it does not fundamentally change the nature of ableism as an organising principle or the ableist character of work organisation. The costs of accessibility are often made out to be disproportionately high and the 'privileges' given to workers with special needs do not correspond to an ableist hierarchy and make it uneconomical to employ (supposedly) less productive workers with disabilities (Hastbacka et al., 2016). Procknow and Rocco (2016), in their review of the literature on human resource development, also identified entry barriers generated by PWD for themselves. This includes self-questioning, doubt in one's own abilities, and self-sabotage, factors which – although not mentioned in the article – often arise from internalised ableist norms (Procknow & Rocco, 2016).

Process discrimination means that a worker with a disability has fewer opportunities to demonstrate their performance, fewer opportunities for development, slower progression through the organisational hierarchy and less chance of becoming a manager. In many cases, they end up in so called 'dead-end' positions, their work is routine, their performance is unduly undervalued, they receive less pay and benefits, and they are dismissed more often (Csillag et al., 2018; Miceli et al., 2001). Another observed phenomenon, homophily, can also be a barrier to organisational advancement: workers with disabilities often seek contact with their peers or the organisation itself creates a separate department for them. This segregation within the organisation can significantly hinder the development of mutual sympathy, solidarity and acceptance among employees and the emergence of an inclusive work culture (Procknow & Rocco, 2016). From an ableist point of view, though the behaviour is understandable, the process contributes to the self-exclusion of employees and hinders genuine integration. In contrast, mentoring is of particular importance (McDowell, 2014 in Procknow & Rocco, 2016), as it can provide tailored support and a tacit transfer of knowledge in areas where the individual is in particular need, including the development of social competences. In the area of training and development, both trainings to support an open workplace culture and inclusion in general as well as trainings specifically targeting workers with disabilities, are important. Research shows that workers with disabilities are also in a more difficult position in

the last stage of the human resource flow model, as they are more often adversely affected by a wave of dismissals or become victims of unlawful dismissals (Procknow & Rocco, 2016), which is closely linked to the already mentioned process discrimination (Vickers, 2017; Zádori et al., 2020).

Examining the concerned population, Branco et al. (2019) pointed out that PWD who face an ableist social environment, perceive their health and well-being as significantly worse than in reality (Branco et al., 2019). If we accept that the subjective experience of well-being and happiness is significantly influenced by employment and the opportunity to engage in meaningful work, it is particularly important to dismantle ableist social stereotypes of disability that inhibit labour market integration, such as the widespread assumption that PWD have lower levels of competence (Cuddy et al., 2008 in Branco et al., 2019).

Although economic and financial vulnerability pose serious barriers to the labour market participation of PWD, resistance to ableist norms especially in discursive strategies are also documented. Jammers et al. (2016), examining the identity-work of employees with disabilities, uncovered three distinct patterns in individual responses to lower levels of competence and productivity. Those in the first group challenged the assumption that their work would be less productive and less efficient simply because they have a disability. In support of their argument, they pointed to their past successes, their high level of competence and often-cited examples of times when they had performed as well as their able-bodied co-workers. By arguing and constructing a positive identity, they successfully resisted the negative identity offered by ableist discourse. Still, by linking performance to the able body and failing to question the primacy of the performance principle in judging a person's worth (Jammaers et al., 2016), counterarguments in fact recreated and reinforced the generally negative picture of PWD.

In the second typical pattern, workers redefined productivity by emphasizing competencies in which they may be stronger than others, such as empathy or perseverance (Jammaers et al., 2016). However, in doing so, they also reproduced the ableist discourse that PWD are more characterized by positive, 'warm' qualities, referring to the aforementioned Stereotypical Content Model (Branco et al., 2019; Fiske et al., 2002; Nario-Redmond et al., 2019). Moreover, they argued for diversity management on business rather than on moral grounds, along the lines of neoliberal ideology that disfavours disadvantaged groups, rather than questioning the narrative altogether.

Paradoxically it is the third approach, accepting the assumption of lower productivity, that seems to have the potential of transforming neoliberal, ableist social discourse in the long run. Pointing out a collective responsibility that transcends the individual case in the matter is crucial: it is the ableist work environment – be it the built environment or the organisational climate – that makes workers with disabilities less productive. It is also important to emphasise that there is an alternative understanding of workplace community or organisational membership that goes beyond performance and points towards a vision of society with a different organisational principle, based, for example, on moral and ethical grounds (Jammaers et al., 2016).

Another positive example is found in self-employment and entrepreneurship, which represent a new kind of 'micro-emancipation' in the world of work, in contrast to being an employee. Although neoclassical economics reinforces the ableist narrative by making entrepreneurship the driving force of the economy (Maroufkhani et al., 2018), and depicting the entrepreneur as an innovative, successful, strong, courageous and above all 'able' person (Cooney, 2008), entrepreneurship offers PWD the opportunity to redefine their social status, and choose a more positive entrepreneurial identity than that of disability (Csillag et al., 2020). However, due to the low number of entrepreneurs with disabilities and their low social, economic and political visibility and capital, their example cannot fundamentally change the general image of the worker with disability, and thus the ableist framework (Cooney & Licciardi, 2019; Csillag et al., 2020; Svastics et al., 2020).

Conclusion

In our study we have outlined the social and interpersonal effects of ableism, which contribute to the social oppression of PWD and the maintenance of the privileges of mainstream society through stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. We have provided insight into the broad and complex ways in which ableism can influence and constrain the opportunities of PWD for action and their responses to social challenges. Increasing awareness and overriding negative impacts, which may be taken for granted at the individual level, but which are compounded and amplified at the societal level, is not an easy task, but it is inevitable for the situation to improve, at least gradually and in the long run.

Highlighting the labour market, we have shown that to achieve real change, we need to dismantle unequal, ableist organisational regimes in the workplace. While disability can be compensated at the individual level through a variety of coping techniques and forms of resistance, the true solution lies in reforming collective social practices and human resource management processes that would transform disability into a positive value. Socio-economic processes pointing in this direction, the increasing participation of PWD in society, in the labour market and in politics, as well as the various forms of resistance and micro-emancipation uncovering the mechanisms of ableism, can, nevertheless, slowly lead to change.

While ableism has proved to be a useful tool for analysis, some criticism of the framework is also apparent, linked to reservations concerning the social model of disability (Owens, 2015). As Könczei and Hernádi (2011, p. 23) emphasise that *"one cannot ... conceive of disability merely as a social context (not at the individual level,*

but e.g., at the macro level). This is because it means losing, among other things, one's own experiences, one's own struggles and pain, which are all constitutive parts of living with a disability." Within this context, it is also important to consider and reflect on the physical-material-emotional reality of disability when examining the external frameworks of ableism. For a person with a disability, the direct bodily-physical and psychological experience of impairment is an everyday reality, to classify this exclusively as a construct of ableism is to deny and invalidate important personal aspects of disability. This attitude is open to criticism from a scientific point of view as well, since it risks reducing the complex phenomenon of disability to being one-dimensional. The active involvement and participation of PWD in academia and research (e.g. insider researchers, participatory research, and increase of disability content in education), as well as the search for and highlighting of their respective agency can also help to ensure that ableist social and economic discourses do not become normative and oppressive (hegemonic) discourses that exclude other aspects, but are linked to human rights, empowerment and emancipatory processes that promote change and progress.

Our aim with this paper was to summarise the basic ideas and give food for thought – and so we would like to conclude by suggesting some research possibilities somewhat arbitrarily from among the many possible directions for those interested. At the societal level, an exciting direction is the identification and analysis of disabling discourses in social, institutional, policy rhetoric and conversation, or the role of different social and economic stakeholders (e.g., government, rehabilitation organisations, organisations representing PWD, companies, NGO-s) in creating, re-creating or dismantling ableist normativity. A particularly intriguing issue is the political and social participation (or silence) of individuals with disabilities or that of the groups representing them, and the institutional, social, and personal mechanisms of its impact through the lens of ableism and internalised ableism.

In some parts of the world the issue of physical and/or digital accessibility is still very topical – its development and/or barriers could also be scientifically analysed along the lines of ableism. From a labour market perspective, it may be interesting to analyse corporate practices based on Critical Disability Studies and ableism as a framework for analysis: what inclusive or exclusionary HR systems and organisational cultures can be found in business practices, and how inclusive organisations can be developed to support human dignity and equal partnership. At the individual level, exploring both the impact of ableism on identity and the phenomenon of internalised ableism and othering can offer exciting areas for research.

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Appendix

The figures show some typical distributions of the articles identified in the literature collection based on the Scopus database.
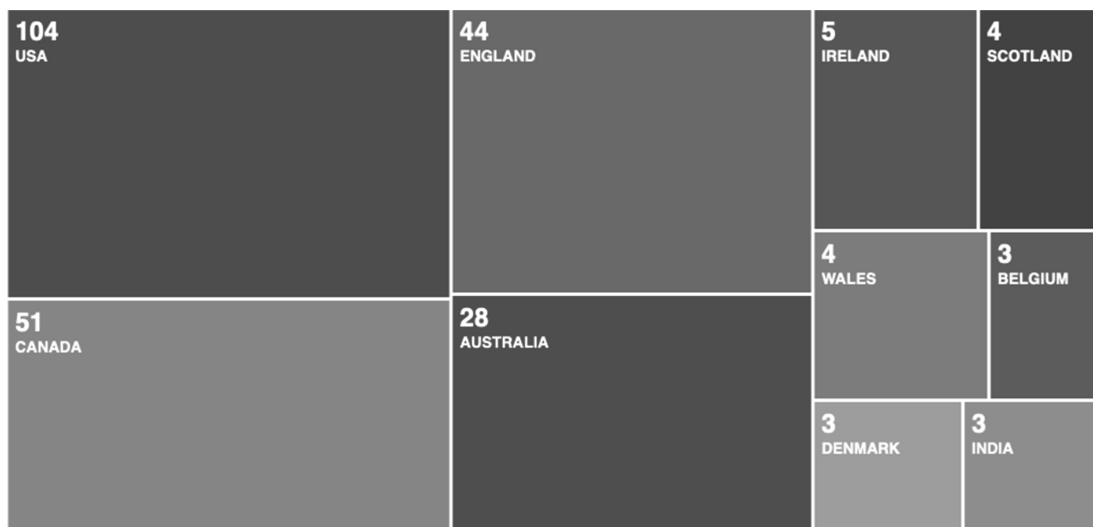
Figure 2

Distribution of articles by discipline
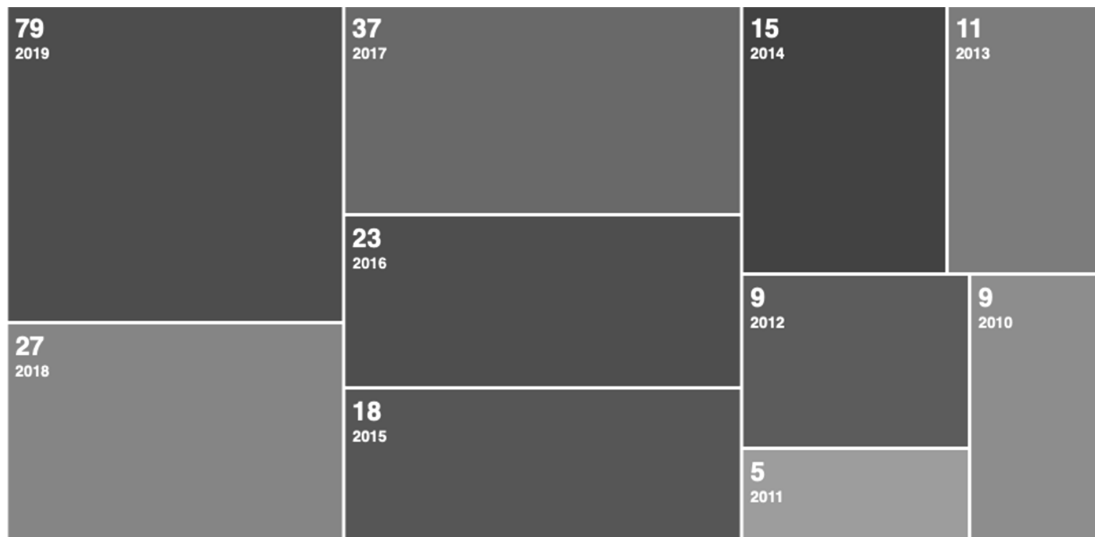

Source: Scopus database

Figure 3

Distribution of articles by place of publication

Source: Scopus database

Figure 4

Distribution of articles by year of publication

79 2019	37 2017		15 2014	11 2013
27 2018	23 2016		9 2012	9 2010
	18 2015		5 2011	

Source: Scopus database

Figure 5

Distribution of articles by journal

36 DISABILITY SOCIETY	5 SOCIAL INCLUSION	4 INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF QUALITATIVE STUDIES EDUCATION	4 SCANDINAVIAN JOURNAL OF DISABILITY RESEARCH
10 JOURNAL OF SOCIAL ISSUES	4 CHILDRENS GEOGRAPHIES	3 BRITISH JOURNAL OF SPECIAL EDUCATION	3 FEMINISM PSYCHOLOGY
	4 INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION	3 EQUITY EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION	

Source: Scopus database