

Die Ambivalenz der Autonomie und ihre Auflösung durch die Assistierte Autonomie (A*5) Bielefeld Focus Group of AI*IM in spring 2026

The **Center for Interdisciplinary Research (ZiF: Zentrum für interdisziplinäre Forschung)** is Bielefeld University's Institute for Advanced Study. Since its founding in 1968, it has been one of the university's central institutions, promoting interdisciplinary exchange between the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. Through its funding formats - in particular research groups and workshops - the ZiF creates ideal conditions for developing new perspectives on complex issues, thereby strengthening the interdisciplinary profile of Bielefeld University. One of the formats offered is the **“Bielefeld Focus Group.”** This enables scientists from the profile-building focus areas to spend a limited period of time working at the ZiF, where they engage in intensive interdisciplinary collaboration with national and international guests.

The AI*IM Consent working group of the AI*IM focus area at Bielefeld University will meet at the ZiF from March 9th to April 2nd 2026, as part of such a Focus Group under the title “Die Ambivalenz der Autonomie und ihre Auflösung durch die Assistierte Autonomie (A*5)”.

The focus group deals with the theoretical and practical ambivalence of autonomy: on the one hand, the emancipation movement emphasizes the right of all people to independence and self-determination; on the other hand, medically relevant decisions involving cognitively impaired individuals pose the ethical challenge of how autonomy can be maintained when the ability to give consent is limited. The concept of assisted autonomy aims to overcome this tension through supportive measures and technologies by providing assistance that enables people with impairments to exercise their rights and self-determination to the best of their ability without undermining them. This is of great importance in the context of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which emphasizes universal self-determination.

During its time at the ZiF, Focus Group A*5 plans to hold three interdisciplinary workshops with researchers from the fields of philosophy, medical ethics, computer science, sociology, psychology, and health sciences, as well as with experts from their own experience, i.e., people with cognitive impairments. The workshops will deal specifically with the following topics:

- 1. Theoretical foundations and ethical challenges of the ambivalence of autonomy**
- 2. Practical implementation of assisted autonomy in inclusive medicine with participatory formats and experts from their own experience**
- 3. Opportunities and risks of AI assistance systems to support autonomy.**

The working group integrates experts from their own experience as active co-researchers who contribute their life realities and perspectives. In addition, a mentoring format is planned in which these experts advise other affected individuals, thus promoting a practical exchange of experiences. Participatory discussion groups and collegial exchange rounds will take place to deepen research projects and discuss funding formats. External expert guests will participate as speakers, coaches, and discussion participants.

The project develops guidelines for dealing with assisted autonomy, identifies research gaps, and establishes participatory and interdisciplinary research paths for the further development of the AI*IM focus area. The results will be published and presented at a public conference in the summer of 2026.

The project thus combines depth of content with social relevance and practical applicability, and contributes significantly to raising the profile of Bielefeld University in the interdisciplinary field of AI and inclusive medicine.