

Disabled environmentalisms

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Abstract

This chapter argues that the environmental movement has an ableist ethos. Within the movement, there is a widespread lack of recognition of the variety of needs and capabilities of disabled people, and a failure of representation of disabled people in many environmentalist spaces, as well as in the movement itself. Practices typically characterised as ‘green’ are often more accessible for non-disabled people and, in the UK, disabled people are rarely characterised as playing an active part as environmentalists, despite the fact that they are an important constituency and are likely to have passionate concerns about this issue. In this chapter we outline the research on disability and environmentalism to date, following the roots of the exclusionary nature of environmentalism and propose an alternative framework for inclusive environmental agendas. In doing so we discuss the possibility for ‘disabled environmentalisms’ - creating spaces

for disabled communities to engage with this movement which does not exclude the possibility for agency and is capable of imagining truly socially just environmental futures.

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Introduction

Life has changed unrecognisably since the Industrial Revolution and, since the 1950s, rapid economic growth has brought us increased consumption and globalization. Taking into account these multiple challenges, and in order to leave a resilient planet for generations to come, we need to focus on questions of equality/equity and sustainability. This will enable us to achieve the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to leave no one behind (Leach et al, 2018; UN, 2018). As Leach et al. (2018, p. 1) state 'It is no longer possible nor desirable to address the dual challenges of equity and sustainability separately'.

Within policy and practice addressing environmental problems there is increasing recognition that inclusive action, accounting for people's different needs and capabilities, is necessary when planning for change (Middlemiss, 2018). We can see evidence of this recognition in the actions of international monitoring and decision-making bodies, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), that are charged with providing comprehensive evidence of anthropogenic changes. These institutions now consider the impacts of such environmental changes on diverse populations, including indigenous people, women, and older people (IPCC 2018; IPBES 2019), however, impacts of environmental change on disabled populations are not fully recognized (Kosanovic et al, 2019a). Within academic literature there is increasing attention to

the significance of *some* forms of inequality in considering how to address environmental issues. Particularly notable examples have been the importance of income (Büchs and Schnepf, 2013), class (Johnston, 2008; Bell, 2020) and gender (Hawkins, 2012; MacGregor, 2016) in shaping people's experiences of environmentalism. This book, indeed, is a welcome effort in bringing these contributions into conversation.

However, whilst the environmental justice movement refers to 'all people's needs' it rarely addresses disabled people's needs specifically (Johnson, 2011) and disability rarely appears in either the environmental agenda or as a category of analysis in academic research on environment (Kafer, 2013). As such, the intersectional issues that disabled people face (through gender, race, class sexuality etc.) are largely ignored in theory and action. This is particularly surprising considering that the United Nations report on disability and the SDGs released in 2018 evidenced interlinkages between disability and several SDGs and highlighted inequalities (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009; Brondizio et al., 2016; UN, 2018). It is also notable that the emerging, albeit limited, literature that does include disabled populations, shows that disabled people experience different impacts from changing environments (Morris et al., 2018; Lunga et al., 2019; Watts et al., 2019; Kosanic and Petzold, 2020). It also shows that they face different barriers to inclusion and have different opportunities to contribute to the agenda (Hemingway and Priestley, 2006; Leipoldt, 2006; Charles and Thomas, 2007; Imrie and Thomas, 2008; Wolbring, 2009; Alaimo, 2010; Fenney and Snell, 2011; Withers, 2012; Fenney Salkeld, 2016, 2017a, 2017b).

Within this chapter, we develop an agenda for the fostering of disabled environmentalism, demonstrating how such an agenda, through the centralising of disabled bodies, can enable environmental justice movements to be truly inclusive of all people's needs. In doing so, we recognise that understanding disabled people's experiences as citizens, activists and subjects of environmental policies and interventions is a necessary first step in understanding the development of such an agenda. We further acknowledge that we need an interdisciplinary research agenda, bringing together geography, ecology, and environmental social sciences with disability studies. To achieve this, we begin by identifying the barriers that disabled people face to inclusion in environmentalism, both in terms of integrating environmentalism within everyday practices and in participating in the organisation and implementation of more public forms of environmentalism, such as organised activism and protest. These barriers are then contextualised within academic scholarship on disability and environmentalism and through the social and medical models of disability. In the final section we propose an agenda of 'cripping' environmentalism, centring disability within environmental futures, recognising the disabled body as the antithesis of the capitalist modes of production upon which environmental degradation is predicated, and demonstrating that an accessible world is not only desirable, but *necessary* for environmental protection and social justice.

Barriers to disabled people's inclusion in environmentalism

Here we provide a broad overview of the barriers that disabled people can experience when attempting to participate in environmentalism - both in everyday environmentalism, as well as in the organisation and implementation of more public forms of activism. Our list is by no means

exhaustive, but we select these to demonstrate the wide range of barriers and in order to highlight how endemic they are within environmentalism. By doing so, this section provides both the context for demonstrating the necessity of developing disabled environmentalisms, as well as a space for readers to critically reflect on the inclusivity of their own environmental practices.

Before we begin, we should note that disabled people's experiences are hugely diverse and disabled people have varying politics, expectations and desires to be engaged in an environmental agenda. The concept of disability is very broad, and can include a wide range of impairments, including: Autism spectrum conditions, long-term health conditions, mental health conditions, physical or mobility impairments, sensory impairments (e.g. deafness and blindness) and learning difficulties. Here, when we identify barriers, we note that these will not be barriers for all disabled people. However, we include these because we believe that they will be substantial barriers for some. We also recognise that many of the barriers highlighted within this section are UK-specific. This is because they represent many of our lived, and lived alongside, experiences of disability. Their context-specificity, in itself, demonstrates the need for deeper and wider engagement with disability within the environmental agenda

Material barriers

The body

People can be excluded from environmentalist practices due to their material circumstances, including sometimes physical exclusion for bodily reasons. Some bodies can easily travel by bike, others cannot; some can exist off-grid, some cannot; some can reduce the water and energy

consumption associated with cleanliness practices, some cannot (Fenney and Snell, 2011; Fenney Salkeld, 2016, 2017a, 2017b). Environmental campaigns often target what are considered 'convenience items'. For example, plastic straws, pre-packaged produce, and wet wipes. However, what these campaigns often fail to consider is that items considered as 'convenient' by non-disabled people can often be central to the health and independence of disabled people. Bendy plastic straws can be essential for drinking, and drinking at the correct angle, for some mobility-impaired people and single-use straws are often much more hygienic than reusable straws. Pre-chopped produce supports people with limited hand dexterity as well as energy-related issues to maintain independence in cooking. Wet wipes can be critical to support some disabled people to have control over their own hygiene.

This is also not simply about the physicality of bodies. Mental health can also be a material factor in exclusion. Mental health problems can lead to fatigue which necessitates using more energy intensive modes of transport. People can face difficulties using crowded public transport due to panic attacks, making car use a necessity. Further, medication, for either mental or physical health, are sometimes stigmatised by environmentalists as coming from 'big pharma' (Fenney Salkeld, 2017).

The built environment

Material circumstances and barriers to environmentalism not only relate to the materiality of the body but also the materiality of living. Barriers to environmentalism can be in terms of meetings being held in rooms only accessible by stairs (Fenney Salkeld, 2017). This is common as much

environmental activism is unfunded and free meeting spaces are less likely to have access facilities, such as ramps and lifts. Spaces of environmental activism, such as public protests, frequently do not have Changing Places (fully accessible toilet facilities), or even any toilet facilities, within close proximity.

Social barriers

Given that disability is rarely discussed in relation to environmentalism, it is not surprising that campaigns to promote active travel or banning plastic straws do not take into account the needs of disabled people. Worse than this, is the creation of stigma towards disabled people (for not acting 'correctly') through environmental campaigning. Campaigns which call for total bans on items that enable disabled people to live their lives (e.g. plastic straws, cars etc.) not only have health and independence implications for disabled people, but can also label disabled people as anti-environmental, and result in public shaming and policing of their actions. For instance, the widespread campaign against single use plastic straws in 2019 has resulted in these no longer being readily available in public places. This puts those disabled people who need to use straws to drink at risk, as well as making it more risky to be disabled and drinking in public.

Note that stigmas associated with disability are widespread in society, with many people holding disableist (prejudice against disabled people) or ableist (an assumption of non-disability) views (Chapman, 2020; Renke, 2020). Such prejudiced viewpoints can also be traced through the environmentalist movement, which tends to place a high social value on self-sufficiency, the use of 'natural' products (as opposed to the medication and technology that keeps some disabled

people alive), and the strength of the human body in nature, for instance (Fenney Salkeld, 2017; Ray and Sibara, 2017). The expectation by the movement that environmental activists will be non-disabled is, in itself, likely to be stigmatising, and to create additional barriers to participation.

Institutional barriers

Participation in environmentalism, either through everyday practices or within activist organisations, movements and demonstrations, is often perceived as indicative of non-disability by punitive institutions, such as the police, or state departments like the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Disabled people's participation in environmentalism can be considered evidence of exaggeration or fictionality of disability and thus requiring regulation and disciplinary action. For example, in 2018, Lancashire Police admitted passing on details and video footage of disabled anti-fracking protesters to the DWP, considering ambulatory wheelchair use a 'clear suggestion that fraud may be being committed' (Rahim, 2018). This resulted in a number of disabled anti-fracking activists being contacted by the DWP for benefits reassessments (Pring, 2018). More recently, it has emerged that Greater Manchester Police has a written agreement with the DWP to pass on the details of any disabled person taking part in protests in the region (Pring, 2019).

Breaches of disabled people's right to protest create a culture of fear, where legitimate engagement in environmental activism risks illegitimate sanctions (Pring, 2018, 2019). Similarly, the link between physical activity and assumed physical ability can limit disabled people's

participation in active transport. In their annual survey of disabled cyclists, Wheels for Wellbeing (2018) found that 49% of respondents were worried that their benefits would be withdrawn or reduced as a result of being physically active, and 17% reported that this worry deterred them from cycling or caused them to cycle less or give up cycling. These concerns are legitimate - 6% reported that they have had benefits reduced or withdrawn as a result of cycling and being physically active.

Financial barriers

Being disabled is expensive. Disabled people face extra costs in order to have the same standard of living as non-disabled people (Scope, 2019). These include higher transport costs, expensive equipment, paying more for housing, and paying more for energy. For disabled adults these costs amount to an average of half the household income (after housing costs). Disabled adults are also more likely to be unemployed and more likely to live in poverty than non-disabled adults (Scope, 2019), exacerbating financial pressure for many disabled people. Disability and income poverty are strongly correlated and, as such, households can be affected by a double constraint. This is an issue of distributive justice, and also impacts on households' access to participation in some environmentally friendly practices. Equally, income is closely related to environmental impact (Oswald et al., 2020), with people on higher incomes having higher impacts, and as such disabled people are likely to have smaller impacts on average.

A classic example of reducing environmental impact in everyday life is replacing private car use with emission-free travel such as cycling. Cycling as active travel for disabled people is a

particularly promising lower-impact transport solution considering that many disabled people find cycling easier than walking (Wheels for Wellbeing, 2019). However, whilst standard two-wheel bicycles can be purchased relatively cheaply and are widely available second-hand, the same cannot be said for non-standard and adapted cycles which disabled people may need. These include equipment such as trikes, handcycles, recumbents and electric cycles; the cost of which can easily extend into thousands of pounds. In addition to the higher costs of purchase, there are also cost implications in terms of secure storage and insurance due to their larger size and higher value. In the UK, whilst the mobility component of disability benefits can be used for Motability and private car access, there is no provision for covering non-standard cycles. This means that disabled people have to cover the higher cost of accessing more environmentally friendly travel themselves.

Temporal barriers

Another example of reducing environmental impact in everyday life is replacing private car use with public transport such as buses and trains. However, there are implications in terms of time added as a result of in/accessibility. In the UK, whilst the majority of buses are now accessible for people with mobility aids, there is often only one wheelchair space per bus. Waiting time is then extended for a person who requires this space if it is occupied by another disabled person or by non-disabled users and is not being regulated by the driver. As the majority of trains and stations in the UK are not designed for level boarding, ramp access is needed for mobility-impaired people. However, in addition to ramp access being steep and sometimes dangerous, mobility-impaired disabled people are required to pre-book and depend upon station assistance. This not

only reduces flexibility in travel but also has significant implications when station assistance fails to materialise and disabled people are unable to dis/embark. These failures in support provision increase journey times as well as create significant frustration making public transport an inconvenient form of travel compared to private vehicles.

Public transport use during the COVID 19 pandemic is also riskier for people who are particularly vulnerable to the effects of the virus, external shocks such as these have particularly pronounced effects on disabled people. This is why it is doubly important to pay attention to the potentially regressive effects of environmental policy and practice on disabled people: there can be less flexibility in the way that people are able to cope with changes in their lives. Given that disabled people earn less (as above) and these inequalities will be even more exacerbated in a Global South. Hence, we can also see how mobility can be (further) restricted if policy increases the cost of car use without protecting or excluding people with mobility impairments.

The personal costs – being the disabled killjoy

Being involved in environmental activism, just as being involved in any social activity, is likely to bring disabled people into contact with ableist and disableist views (as in 'social barriers' above). Given the limited recognition of disabled people in the environmental movement, there is extra labour in being disabled as an environmental activist. Symbolic exclusion and violence have an important impact on activists, which are sometimes difficult to document: how do we measure non-participation, or offence caused by particular framings of environmentalism? Disabled people who wish to participate often find that the impetus is upon themselves to highlight issues

in access and resolve issues of access. The labour of this time consuming, preventing disabled people from participating more fully in environmental activism itself. To undertake such labour is also exhausting and one can both be worn down and become down when having to continuously push against what has already been constructed with little regard for diversity (Ahmed, 2017). And through this process, the disabled body – building on the work of Sara Ahmed (2017) – becomes the ‘killjoy’. By highlighting inequalities in accessibility, as well as the specific challenges associated with a disabled-inclusive environmentalism, disabled people kill joy (Brooks and Snelling, 2018). By highlighting inequalities in accessibility, disabled people may be considered “wall makers” (Ahmed, 2017:252); drawing attention away from the environmental concerns central to the activist movements themselves. Disabled people who call out the symbolic exclusions they witness may be met with denial or accused of not caring about the environment or of damaging or distracting from movement aims, thus further alienating them from environmental activism.

Disability and environmentalism in the academic context

As previously mentioned, to date there has been limited work that directly addresses environmentalism and disability. Within this section we outline the ‘so-far’ contributions to this field, recognising opportunities to develop this work through links to the broader critical body of work on social inequalities and justice in environmentalism documented in this book. We look below at how disability studies understands the environment and how environmental studies understand disability and then outline more recent engagements recognising the necessity for more critical and transformative approaches.

Disability studies on the environment

Whilst the environment is a central concern within disability studies, the focus has almost exclusively been on the built environment and ensuring that the built environment is accessible to disabled people (Kafer, 2013; Ray and Sibara, 2017). In other words, overcoming 'material barriers', some of which we have identified above, and ensuring an enabling built environment for the materiality of disabled bodies. For instance - and recognising that these are but a few examples of what overcoming material barriers involve - providing level-access or ramp access to buildings, disabled parking spaces, Changing Places toilet facilities, dropped kerbs and signal-controlled pedestrian crossings.

This focus on the built environment within disability studies is situated within the social model of disability. The social model of disability recognises that many of the barriers that disabled people face to full and meaningful participation in society would not exist if the physical and social environments in which people live were adapted to accommodate a diverse range of embodiments and interactions (Thomas, 1999). Such barriers within the built environment, as well as social barriers, institutional barriers and financial barriers, are all discussed above within the context of environmentalism. The social model recognises that, as a result of these barriers external to disabled people themselves, disabled people face a form of social oppression - disablism. A related concept useful to this work is ableism. Ableism describes how society is generally organised from a nondisabled viewpoint, and thus ignores or minimises other experiences and embodiments. An unquestioning able-bodied 'normal' implicitly positions

disabled people as 'abnormal' (Imrie, 1996), rather than addressing the assumptions that underlie how society has constructed what normal is deemed to be. Ableism underlies many of the issues disabled people face when trying to engage with environmental movements (Fenney, 2017), in addition to any overt disablism they may face.

Environmental studies and disability

Within environmental scholarship, there is engagement with disability, most commonly in terms of public health and the impact of environmental degradation on disabled bodies or disabled bodies as the outcome of degraded environments (Ray and Sibara, 2017). For example, climate change is expected to disproportionately affect disabled people (Smith et al, 2017; Kosanic et al, 2019a). The higher intensity and frequency of extreme weather events, such as cyclones, hurricanes, extreme precipitation events, heatwaves, cold waves, droughts and storm surges, will affect disabled people more severely (Beniston and Stephenson, 2004; Zwiers et al, 2013; Walsh-Warder, 2016; Baker et al, 2017). Slow onset impacts such as sea level rise, or impacts on ecosystems, such as changes in geographical distributions of species including latitudinal, longitudinal and altitudinal changes, or changes in phenology, genetic diversity, species declines, invasive species intrusions and extinctions are also might pose a greater threat to disabled people (Parmesan and Yohe, 2003; Kosanic et al, 2019b). In the epoch of Anthropocene, climate and environmental change can exacerbate underlying conditions (e.g. through the mental and physical health impacts of extreme climatic events or pandemic situations) or can make disabled people susceptible to disaster-related injuries, displacement, vector or waterborne diseases (e.g. Malaria, EVD4, Zika, MERS, SARS) and potentially lead to higher mortality (Whitmee et al, 2015;

Watts et al, 2019). Given that climate change poses long term pressures to ecosystems and societies, impacting human well-being, migration, infrastructure and settlements, the further impact on disabled people will be important to research, monitor and to take into account in policy (Bell et al, 2020).

For example, it has been known that Small Island states already experience devastating climate change impacts due to sea level rise (Ourbak and Alexandre, 2018; Petzold and Alexandre, 2019). Furthermore, populations closely connected to nature and whose livelihoods are dependent on nature (i.e. indigenous and local populations) are at the highest risks of climate change. Within indigenous and local communities, disabled populations will be the most vulnerable, particularly children and women (Omolo and Mafongoya, 2019).

Without the sustainable use of nature, quality of life and human well-being is jeopardized and can further deteriorate the human benefits from non-human nature (Martín-López et al, 2012; IPBES, 2019). These services have been described as 'ecosystem services' (ES) and defined as benefits that humans gain from nature - provisioning (e.g., food, timber, water), supporting (e.g., soil formation and retention, nutrient cycling, water cycling), regulating (e.g., local climate and air quality, pollination, carbon sequestration and storage) and cultural (e.g., spiritual, place attachment, recreational, aesthetic). These functions of non-human services are essential for human quality of life and well-being (Liu et al, 2010; MEA, 2005; Kosanic and Petzold, 2020). A recent new concept of non-human nature contributions to people (NCP) evolved aiming to include different values and stakeholders in order to better understand human-nature relationships (Diaz et al,

2018; IPBES, 2019). Similarly to ES, the NCP are organised in three broad groups: regulating (e.g., regulating soil or climate), material (e.g., food, energy) and non-material (e.g., recreation, inspiration, spiritual) (Díaz et al, 2019; IPBES, 2019, Pascual et al, 2017).

Provisioning and demand of NCP is, in many cases, context specific and could differ among marginalised groups (e.g. indigenous or disabled populations). For example, provisioning or demand for non-material NCP can be different for someone with a sensory impairment (i.e. relating to hearing or vision). Material NCP (food in particular) may not be evenly distributed among disabled and non-disabled children. This may result in malnutrition in disabled children (Adams et al, 2012; Kerac et al, 2014). In order to reach a just and sustainable future, we need to secure a broad range of NCP to meet needs and good quality of life (MEA, 2005; Diaz, 2020.)

A second body of work in environmental studies centralises environmental exposure, toxicity and subsequent body burdens (Kafer, 2013; Ray and Sibara, 2017). Within this work, disability is often conflated with injustice (Kafer, 2013), with the disabled body, arising from such toxic environments, then commonly utilised to motivate public environmental movements (Di Chiro, 2010). There are parallels here with the framing of the wilderness as a place in which strong (male) bodies overcome adversity, and in which disability is seen as a threat, or risk to these strong bodies, arising from accidents in wild places (Ray, 2013). In both cases, the disabled body is positioned as a cautionary tale, an outcome of accident, or environmental degradation, rather than a whole human being with interests in environmental damage beyond their own body.

Positioning disabled bodies as unfortunate outcomes of human or natural environments, echoes the medical model of disability, which is rooted in the discourse of disability as 'tragedy', and which offers only individualised solutions such as rehabilitation or cure to help a disabled person overcome their impairment (Oliver, 1990). While rehabilitation is not intrinsically negative, its misapplication can lead to people being forced into narrow 'able' embodiments and devaluing of others. This model was the dominant way disability was viewed until the second half of the twentieth century. In the 1960s and 70s, groups of disabled activists began to develop an alternative model - known as the social model, set out above - to better describe their experiences.

The environmental movement, particularly in the English-speaking world, initially characterised environmental problems as stemming from overpopulation: too many people, consuming too much stuff, results in environmental damage. This argument has lost its dominance since the 1980s, as an alternative explanation came to the fore: too much stuff being consumed by the wealthiest, results in environmental damage (Wingate, 2019). The 'overpopulation', or environmental Malthusianist, argument is still apparent in some environmentalist and conservationist responses to environmental problems, however. This perspective on environmentalism is important because of its link with the solution of 'population control', which, in itself, has strong links to eugenics thinking and indeed eugenics policy. It is an easy step from 'there are too many people' to 'there are too many of the wrong kind of people', and some of the foundational thinkers in this field had racist, classist and/or disableist views (read, for instance, Mildemberger's (2019) reflections on the influence of racism, eugenics and

islamophobia in the work of Garrett Hardin. These views had very real consequences in policy: while we cannot say that environmentalism, itself, resulted in forced sterilisations of black, poor and disabled people, Ray (2013) documents how environmentalist ideas contributed to a world in which these things were possible. This is because the aversion to certain kinds of bodies (arising from environmental harm) draws problematic distinctions between those who belong in nature and those who are out of place. Further, while explicitly racist, classist and disableist views in the movement are rarely acknowledged by its members, there are ongoing associations between the environmental movement and white, middle-class, non-disabled identities that can produce exclusion and prejudice. For instance, as we noted above, in describing social barriers to disabled people's engagement in environmentalism, the characterisation of environmentalism as embracing 'nature' and rejecting 'technology' can be problematic for disabled lives in which people rely on technology or medication for survival. The lack of consideration of disabled people is also likely to result in additional barriers to disabled people accessing, and exercising in, nature, both of which can have positive impacts on wellbeing. In addition, the conversations around 'needs' and 'wants', so widespread in the environmental literature, can suggest that only specific levels of 'needs' are acceptable, thereby excluding those who have specific physical needs in order to be able to exist in the world (Ahmed, 2010; Middlemiss, 2018).

Engaging with recent developments in disability studies

There is limited environmental scholarship that critically engages with disability studies itself (Ray and Sibara, 2017), and such discussions of integrating the social or medical models have been largely ignored in environmental thinking. New visions are built on the understanding that

disability is the result of a complex interaction between individual, biological and social factors. One approach highlights that, while people may have impairments which cause difficulties such as pain or fatigue, the disability they face is caused by unequal social relations with non-disabled people (Thomas, 1999). Another, from the World Health Organisation (WHO), suggests that disability should not be seen through either a 'medical' or 'social' model, uniquely, and advocates for a more balanced approach (WHO, 2011). These latter two approaches have advantages in recognising the nuances of disabled people's experiences, and also allow consideration of other factors that will influence a person's experience of disability, such as their gender, class and race. For example, someone who is able to pay for the most advanced adaptations and support will face fewer barriers, while someone who is disabled and Black is likely to face intersecting oppressions due to the impacts of both disablism and racism (Chahal, 2004).

Such approaches remain normative, not transformative. However, disabled people are excluded in lots of parts of society, environmentalism is not necessarily exceptional in this regard. Exclusion is still endemic. Instead, what is needed is 'analyses that recognize and refuse the intertwined exploitation of bodies and environments without demonizing the illnesses and disabilities, and especially the ill and disabled bodies, that result from such exploitation'" (Kafer, 2013, p.158).

Environmentalism and environmental scholarship could use some 'world making' [\(Goodman, 1978\)](#); understood as 'building and reshaping the realities in which we live' (Ginsberg and Rapp, 2017, p.184). Such world making processes would look at how disability worlds come into being and give glimpses of what can happen when disabled people are fully included in civic space (Ginsburg and Rapp, 2017), rather than considering disabled people as signifying 'the future of

no future' (Kafer, 2013, p.34). Such futures move beyond inclusion, as inclusion focuses upon integration into the normative, ableist, capitalist system without transformative change.

Crippling Environmentalism

Centralising disability in environmental futures

Utilising a queer, feminist lens to build upon the social model of disability, recognising its limitations in terms of the marginalisation of disabled people who seek medical intervention and the reification of distinction between 'disabled' and 'non-disabled', Kafer (2013) suggests a political/relational model of disability. By doing so, Kafer seeks to make room for activism and transformative change; 'seeing disability as a potential site for collective reimagining' (Kafer, 2013, p.9). Such a disability politics would be enabled, not because of any essential similarities between disabled people, but because 'all have been labeled as disabled or sick and have faced discrimination as a result' (Kafer, 2013, p.11). We use this political/relational model as a means through which to think about, and crip, environmentalism. Crippling environmentalism would involve centralising disability within environmental futures and demanding that an accessible world is possible and desirable (McRuer, 2006).

According to McRuer (2006), disability is the object against which imagined futures within capitalist, globalized and neo-liberal futures are produced. The very presence of the disabled body within these futures would signify a failure of these ideologies (McRuer, 2006), as it is rehabilitated, cured bodies that are considered 'the sign of progress, the proof of development' (Kafer 2013, p.28). These normatively curative imagined futures are founded in histories of

ableism and disability oppression (Kafer, 2013) and commonly involve invocations of the able-bodied and able-minded white child as 'the fantasmic beneficiary of every political intervention' (Edelman, 2004, p.2).

Processes of adverse environmental change and degradation, including but not limited to climate change, deforestation, air pollution, soil degradation, land and water contamination, are widely attributed to capitalist systems of production (Magdoff and Foster, 2011; Bell, 2014; Klein, 2014). Capitalism is predicated on the perception of the natural environment as a space in which to expand and exploit, as capitalist systems of production require ever greater levels of consumption to, not only drive the economy, but to keep it growing. Consequently there is increasing recognition that environmentalism and environmental justice movements need to be anti-capitalist.

However, environmentalism often involves imagined futures produced as oppositional to the disabled body (Kafer, 2013). This is because environmentalism, much like capitalism, needs the disabled body to provide the "raw material" (McRuer, 2006, p.72) from which the future can be imagined (Kafer, 2013). The white, non-disabled child of capitalist futures is reproduced within environmental futures and aptly demonstrates how, within environmentalism, 'discourses of reproduction, generation and inheritance [which are] shot through with anxiety about disability' (Kafer 2013, p.29). This is particularly relevant considering much of the focus on disability within environmental studies has been the disabling impacts upon bodies (Ray, 2013). As environmentalism is then theorised according to the abilities and experiences of the non-disabled

body, insights of disabled people are erased (Kafer, 2013, p.23). This leads to the type of barriers outlined above in terms of both everyday environmentalism and more public forms of organisation and activism.

And so if crip experiences and epistemologies are the object against which capitalist futures are imagined and perceived as desirable and such capitalist futures are simultaneously the antithesis of sustainable futures, then 'crip experiences and epistemologies should be central to our efforts to counter neoliberalism and access alternative ways of being' (McRuer 2006, pp.42-43). To do so would be to truly centralise the needs of those that environmental justice movements say that they represent (Johnson, 2011). As Alison Kafer (2013, p.3) stresses, 'In imagining more accessible futures, I am yearning for an elsewhere—and perhaps an 'elsewhen'—in which disability is understood otherwise: as political, as valuable, as integral'.

What does crippling environmentalism look like in practice?

An example of centralising crip experiences, is provided within the Department for Transport (2020a) 'Gear Change' report which provides a vision for increasing walking and cycling in the UK in response to environmental and health challenges and inequalities, including air pollution, climate change and congestion. The Gear Change report is supported by Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/20 (DfT 2020b) which provides national guidance to local authorities on best practice for cycle infrastructure design. What makes Gear Change and LTN 1/20 particularly visionary in terms of disabled environmentalism and disabled cycling, is that disabled people's needs are centralised within the development of cycle infrastructure design. LTN 1/20 asserts that infrastructure must

be designed for users of all abilities and disabilities and recognises the wide range of non-standard cycles – ‘cycle resources must be accessible to recumbents, trikes, hand cycles, and other cycles used by disabled cyclists’ (DfT 2020b, p.42) - that can be utilised by disabled people to suit their diverse mobility needs. Access to funding is predicated upon local authorities adhering to the inclusive design criteria of LTN 1/20, meaning that the needs of disabled cyclists are centralised within the planning and design of cycle infrastructures.

Highlighting policy produced under a Conservative government as an example of centralising disabled people in infrastructural development may seem surprising. Particularly so, where a decade of austerity in the UK has disproportionately negatively impacted disabled people and their families (EHRC, 2017). However ‘Gear Change’ and LTN 1/20 are important because of the central position of the role of disabled people within their development, with particular influence from Wheels for Wellbeing. Wheels for Wellbeing are a London-based charity whose work is informed by the experiences of disabled staff, trustees and volunteers, that recognises the physical, emotional and social benefits of cycling and have a vision to get more disabled people cycling for transport, leisure and exercise. Bringing a new and powerful angle to advocacy by applying disability equality legislation and the social model to cycling and supported by cycling advocacy groups who recognise that inclusive and accessible cycling infrastructure benefits all cyclists, Wheels for Wellbeing have successfully worked with national partners, including the Department for Transport, to influence attitudes, policy and standards.

Gear Change and LTN 1/20 and the centralised position of disabled bodies in their development are also important for demonstrating the cross-benefits of, adopting the language of disabled environmentalism, crippling cycling infrastructure. Centralising disabled bodies within the design of cycling infrastructure involves, although is by no means limited to, designing for the dimensions of non-standard cycles - such as recumbent trikes - and taking seriously the need for segregation, good surfaces and ensuring correct cambers. And whilst such design supports disabled people who can and want to cycle, they also provide a safer cycling environment for everyone - including women and children who are less likely to cycle on roads without cycle infrastructures (Aldred and Dales, 2017). Cycle infrastructure designed around the disabled body then not only facilitates environmentalism through supporting disabled people to cycle but is more broadly associated with the type of infrastructures required for a modal shift away from private car use and towards active travel.

Towards a research and policy agenda in academia

This chapter has highlighted the importance of 'cripping' or centralising the disabled body within environmental justice movements in order to develop a disabled environmentalism disentangled from its normative roots and, thus, capable of imagining truly socially just environmental futures. However, it is very clear that the research agenda on environmentalism and disability requires much broader trans- and inter- disciplinary research (Kosanic et al, 2019a; United Nations, 2018; Priebe et al, 2020), both in the Global North and in the Global South. For those working on environment, the research agenda is to recognise the need to make more space for disability studies scholars in our work, to document the effect of policies on disabled people, and to

understand how disabled people will be affected by the recommendations that we make. We also believe that there is space for disability scholars to investigate environmental policy and practice and would welcome both trans- and inter- disciplinary engagement from that field.

Considering, however, that academia is a space in which bodies of knowledge are 'debated, determined, taught, examined and perpetuated' (Gillberg, 2020, p. 12), academia has inevitably had a critical role in the minimal presence of disability in the environmental agenda and environmental justice movements (Johnson, 2011; Kafer, 2013). This is unsurprising considering that academia, particularly in its increasingly neo-liberal form, is premised upon non-disabled membership and is therefore endemic with ableism (Brown, 2020). Whilst such ableism is not necessarily rooted within academia itself, but more broadly, and as previously discussed, historically rooted within perceptions of the inferior body, it is further exacerbated by processes of marketisation. Those within academia who cannot achieve the highest levels of productivity and efficiency, disabled or otherwise, are pushed out (Brown and Leigh, 2018; Brown, 2020). This is because 'the only way in which neoliberal academia enables subjects to be part of the academic body is by being high-performing and marketisable' (Peruzza, 2020, p. 41), whilst those considered 'not calculable enough' are cast out (Peruzza, 2020, p. 41). Subsequently, disabled, chronically ill, and neurodivergent people are unrepresented within academic staff (Brown and Leigh, 2018) where, despite 16% of the working age UK population being disabled, only 4.5% of academic staff have declared a disability or impairment (HESA, 2019). Not only is this a social injustice, but it is also a loss to academia and the development of critical theory surrounding all academic work, including environmentalism, particularly as lived experience can be central to

the tenets of its development. This is not to advocate for funneling disabled academics towards disability studies or the integration of disability studies within their work, which too would be a social injustice if not their desired or inspired field to work within (Brown and Leigh, 2018), but rather highlight that theory and practice produced within an ableist academy will be inherently ableist in scope.

If we are to develop an environmental justice movement that *truly* responds to all people's needs (Johnson 2011) and leaves no one behind (Leach et al., 2018; UN, 2018) then we not only need to Crip environmentalism, but also consider the wider institutions implicated within such movements and the roles and responsibilities – and maybe even power? – of those within these institutions.

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