

7 Still waiting for the hand to be raised

On being cripple killjoys at an ableist university

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I start to forget things. When I leave my home for a conference, I notice that my suitcase is very light. As I arrive at the hotel, I realise that I have forgotten to pack some of my clothes, two charging cords, props that I was going to show during one of my two presentations and leaflets for my new book. Afterwards, I remember myself running between different sessions at the conference. Several months later, I find out that I forgot one of my dresses at the hotel. A couple of coursebooks disappear the weeks before the doctor gives me a certificate of illness.

This chapter is based on collaborative autoethnography about being disabled in contemporary working life. It draws from the two authors' experiences as instructors and researchers at a Swedish university. One of us (Nordgren) has a visible, permanent impairment and is a wheelchair user. The other researcher (Apelmo) has long-term experiences of burnout, resulting in fatigue and sleeplessness, and invisible cognitive impairments like problems with memory, attention and concentration. Research shows that for the majority of those who are burnt out, cognitive impairments and sensitivity to stress remain for several years after the first diagnosis (Glise, Wiegner & Jonsdottir, 2020; see also Kågström, 2016).

Disabled people are underrepresented in academia (Sheridan & Kotevski, 2014; Brown & Leigh, 2018; Mellifont et al., 2019) and disabled academics are hindered from fully participating and have to prove their existence as productive and 'good enough' employees (Waterfield, Beagan & Weinberg, 2018). Disabilities *per se* have major impacts on opportunities to gain employment in the academy and to become established in the field. Furthermore, disabilities can lead to missing out on career opportunities (Saltes, 2020) and, for those with invisible impairments, to not disclose them can lead to missing out on accommodations (Waterfield, Beagan & Weinberg, 2018; Öhrn, 2020). Inequalities in the workplace may be maintained in subtle ways, for example through a preference for sameness (those already established are attracted to those similar to themselves), leading to a cloning of the organisational culture (Essed & Goldberg, 2002). Being selected because of sameness is a privilege, and this – as is true of privilege in

general – is not something that is apparent to those who are privileged. Writing on universities, justice and equality, researchers have explained how privilege is taken for granted:

Moving in rooms that are designed according to my body type or being judged by people who are similar to me, supports my feeling of being free, autonomous and self-helped. It allows me to feel that I entered the room, through education or up the career ladder of my own power.

(Brade, Schmitt & Sandell, 2014: 4, *our translation*)

The privileged person experiences what cultural theorist Sara Ahmed (2012) calls *flow*. Writing about its opposite, she describes how longstanding traditions within the university have led to: ‘the sedimentation of history into a barrier that is solid and tangible in the present, a barrier to change as well as to the mobility of some, a barrier that remains invisible to those who can flow into the spaces created by institutions’ (Ahmed, 2012: 175). This barrier can be about being one who is not asked, chosen or acknowledged; instead, one is the one for whom experiences are stopped. It can also be about feeling unwanted because of alleged unproductivity (McRuer, 2006). Disability studies scholar Fiona Kumari Campbell (2009) describes the problem of (able-bodied) colleagues, who most likely have never reflected on their privilege (see also Bain & Tremain, 2015). Our introductory quotation in this chapter illustrates the experience of gradually shifting from being privileged by virtue of able-bodiedness, to developing cognitive impairments and facing barriers in a stressful contemporary working life. This is also a shift from being seen as promising, to being regarded as less productive by others in the workplace, often in a subtle and vague way.

Having an impairment in an environment where impairments are rare could be perceived as a representation of diversity. However, several authors have questioned the very idea of diversity, since it often hides exclusionary sexism, homophobia, racism and ableism (Mohanty, 2003; McRuer, 2006; Ahmed, 2009, 2012). The postcolonial feminist writer Chandra Talpade Mohanty points out that universities are politically and culturally charged spaces in which ideas about class, gender and ethnicity are created and reproduced, and in which different social groups fight over the legitimate production of knowledge (Mohanty, 2003). Diversity is what Ahmed (2009) calls a ‘happy word’, one which breathes consensus, unlike racism (or ableism) which points to injustice and inequality. Crip theorist Robert McRuer links the talk of diversity to what he describes as a neoliberal ‘discursive climate of tolerance’, where disabled people seem to be included and work side by side with able-bodied people while their subordination is maintained (2006: xx). Several scholars have also highlighted that rhetoric about diversity constructs certain categories of people as problematic and in need of support, while others become invisible (Ahmed, 2009, 2012; Brade, Schmitt & Sandell, 2014). Thus, the problem is attributed to those who are excluded rather than

the institution (Ahmed, 2012). These scholars suggest a shift in perspective, from the individuals who are regarded as outsiders or in the margins, to a focus on exclusionary mechanisms and patterns of action such as inaccessibility or discriminating attitudes among those who are insiders or at the centre (Brade, Schmitt & Sandell, 2014). In this chapter, by focusing on examples of inaccessibility, we highlight processes that hinder change or make change impossible in the academic workplace. This perspective opens up a critique of the forms of resistance to accessibility that exist within academic walls.

How, then, can change be achieved? For this, gender studies scholars Merri Lisa Johnson and Robert McRuer (2014) suggest the figure of the *crip killjoy*, referring to Ahmed's *feminist killjoy* (2010). The crip killjoy does not say 'I can't', which is about ability, but 'I don't want to' – I am unwilling. This means a refusal to maintain a hard working pace or 'to act in accordance with the system of compulsory able-bodiedness – that requires individuals to mask, suppress, and disregard discomfort' (Johnson & McRuer, 2014: 136) in the form of, for example, fatigue, pain or medication. Being a killjoy can also be about being alert and repeatedly paying attention to injustice (Ahmed, 2012).

Inspired by this shift of perspective, this chapter draws from disability studies as well as feminist theories to explore how working life is made to include some bodies but not others, and to what effects. How is ableism reproduced? Which bodies do not fit into contemporary working life? And how do these aspects constitute obstacles to accessibility? We also discuss possible strategies for social change by being crip killjoys (Johnson & McRuer, 2014).

Cripistemologies and collaborative autoethnography

Drawing on historian of science Donna Haraway's (1988) ideas of situated knowledge, Johnson suggests the notion of *cripistemologies*¹ to designate 'thinking from the critical, social, and personal position of disability' (Johnson & McRuer, 2014: 134). Our knowledge and experiences are dependent on the situated body and are influenced by, for example, gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality and functionality. Our different experiences orient us in different ways: some things are perceived as central, interesting and engaging, while others are relegated to the background (Ahmed, 2006). The notion of cripistemologies invites coalitions between people with experience of different types of disabilities as well as allies: 'The production of knowledge about disability comes not only from being disabled but from being with and near disability, thinking through disabled sensations and situations, whether yours or your friend's' (Johnson & McRuer, 2014: 141). From this position, ableist ideas about the normal body and the normal way of thinking and feeling are criticised and may be exceeded (Wendell, 1997). Ableism marks out what is a healthy body and a normal psyche and which emotions it is acceptable to express. The normal adult is assumed to be independent and productive. Normal people master their body and consciousness, while disabled people tend to be seen as a problem or a vulnerable group that drains the system (Campbell, 2009).

In this chapter we use collaborative autoethnography to explore situated knowledge about disabilities and the workings of ableism, trying to make ‘a better account of the world’ (Haraway, 1988: 579). Collaborative autoethnography is described as a qualitative method ‘that enables researchers to use data from their own life stories as situated in sociocultural contexts in order to gain an understanding of society through the unique lens of self’ (Chang, Ngunjiri & Hernandez, 2013: 18; see also Leigh & Brown, 2020). It has three components. First, the personal and embodied experience is written down as an *autobiography*. Second, the experience is put in its sociocultural context, that is, as an *ethnography*. Finally, collaborative autoethnography is *collaborative* (Corroto & Havenhand, 2015). By using this method, giving concrete examples from our everyday working life and going close to the experiences in the analysis, we hope to shed light on the complex obstacles to accessibility.

We began with writing self-narratives on the chosen subject: How are the universities made to include some bodyminds, but not others, and to what effect? We then read each other’s stories, and compared and reflected on them verbally. After that, we returned to our autobiographical writing, developed the self-narratives and collaboratively put them in their sociocultural context, relating them to previous research and theory (Chang, Ngunjiri & Hernandez, 2013; Corroto & Havenhand, 2015). The narratives are written in first person to emphasise the autobiographical point of view. Our names are omitted, since we do not find them relevant. Some of the quotations may seem impairment-specific, but an accessible work environment is better for everybody. Physical accessibility is good for employees who have temporary impairments, aching bodies or are pregnant, just to name a few, and everybody benefits from good light and sound environments. Stress may have physical manifestations, like increased pain, and having physical impairments in an inaccessible work place may lead to stress.

Obstacles to an accessible workplace

In our autoethnographies we have a wealth of examples of inaccessibilities at the university. Below, we have chosen a selection representing everyday situations, related to four themes: *physical (in)accessibility*, *open-plan offices and the flexible worker*, *crip time* and *diffuse responsibility*.

Physical (in)accessibility

A working place is not a neutral room: ‘objects, as well as spaces, are made for some kinds of bodies more than others’ (Ahmed, 2006: 51). The spaces in which we are supposed to carry out our work, indoors as well as outdoors, may be seen as an expression of ableism, as in the following example:

After a reorganisation, our new department gathers in a renovated building. My first lecture with students who had just entered their

programme ended up in a hall where the podium was downstairs via quite a few steps. No elevator or other accessible entrance were available. By the entrance, there was adapted seating for people using wheelchairs. Thus, the hall was built for students using wheelchairs but not for lecturers using such aids. This disclosure started an intense process where the whole building was examined in terms of accessibility. A long list of imperfections was made.

The lecture hall, with accessible wheelchair spaces for the audience but with an inaccessible podium for the speaker, constitutes wheelchair users as passive listeners, not as active lecturers or students (Shildrick & Price, 1996; Inckle, 2018). This incident led to a number of administrative measures pending the reconstruction of the halls. Initially, instructors with movement impairments were told not to book these halls. Later, the Swedish Work Environment Authority closed down the halls. This aroused new reactions, now among able-bodied colleagues. Some had initially expressed support and showed indignation that a newly renovated building had inaccessible halls, but when it became a fact that the halls could not be used at all and lectures were to be held in another building – meaning they would have to move – colleagues disapproved.

The next quote deals with inaccessible objects:

Other classrooms are flat. The lecturer's desk, where you put your computer and notes, is adjustable in height. However, these tables must be adjusted by putting pressure from above, meaning that it is impossible to lower the table if you do not stand. When this happens, I must always ask some student to press down the table.

Despite legislation and updated buildings, the disabled lecturer cannot rely on accessibility and will thus be constructed as dependent on help and support. The rooms and furnishings are obviously built for able-bodied lecturers. It appears as if disabled academics are unable to 'meet the standards of university environments' (Waterfield, Beagan & Weinberg, 2018: 328), not the reverse, that it is the university that does not meet the accessibility standards. We interpret these two quotations as expressions of the 'discursive climate of tolerance' (McRuer, 2006: xx). At a first glance, disabled employees seem to be included and tolerated, but there are apparently limits to this inclusion and tolerance.

It is not only buildings that need to be accessible. It is also crucial to be able to transport oneself to the building.

Going by car is my only way to get to work. At none of the university buildings, were disabled parking spots initially arranged. In the building where I usually work, we argued for three or four spots since we have employees, students and visitors in need of such parking. The answer to this request was that regulations required only one spot according to a mathematical model. However, they would try to arrange two spots. The

same numbers of spots have been arranged outside the other buildings too, but only after several reminders. The actual need seemed to be of no importance. The access to these spots has however been limited from time to time. For six months, a container was parked in one of the spots, and other spots had a three-hour limit, making it impossible to park the whole working day.

Demands for accessibility in university buildings have been raised repeatedly, by us and by our colleagues, disabled or not, in the disability studies research group. We see these as examples of crip killjoys persistently asking for justice. This struggle for basic accommodation is also described in a Canadian study, which discusses a parking situation which was solved only after colleagues threatened to paint a wheelchair sign on a spot (Waterfield, Beagan & Weinberg, 2018). The consequences of not finding an accessible parking spot on campus include having to go to work much earlier in the morning and accounting for having to drive around in search for a spot, just in case. The problem is thus not attributed to the organisation (Ahmed 2012) and instead becomes individualised: it is our problem, since students and colleagues expect us to be on time for lectures or meetings.

Being a researcher means off-campus work too, doing fieldwork or taking part in seminars or conferences that involve travelling and staying overnight.

When I recently registered for a conference, I found out that the recommended hotel was inaccessible for wheelchair users. While other attendees would probably stay at the recommended hotel, I had to find another one. This involved missing social interaction, opportunities for meeting acquaintances, brainstorming with colleagues, benchmarking and collaborations for future projects.

Meetings and kick-offs sometimes take place outside campus. A conference room at a hotel or restaurant is booked, sometimes in combination with a social event. All such events must be booked from procured suppliers and via a contract. When planning for a two-day workshop, it became obvious that accessibility was not one of the requirements when the university made the procurement.

Inaccessibilities make some work difficult or impossible to accomplish. While accessibility is never solely about physical accessibility and technological solutions (Mitchell, Snyder & Ware, 2014), it is essential that all the university's premises and the areas outside and between buildings (the latter are often forgotten) comply with the applicable legislation on accessibility (see SFS, 2008:567; SFS, 2010:900; SFS, 2011:338). In the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) on which Swedish accessibility legislation is based, the right to a 'work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible' is recognised. 'Reasonable accommodation' should be offered, but only so far that it does not constitute 'a disproportionate or undue burden'

(UN, 2006). Where the limit of the reasonable lies can, of course, be debated. Theatre scholar Carrie Sandahl argues that ‘disabled peoples’ unreasonableness and burdensomeness are sources of ingenuity’, and suggests a shift of perspective: ‘let us go beyond accommodation, which assumes we start with mainstream and flex to include disability. Instead let us start with disability’s unreasonableness and burdensomeness to significantly remodel the mainstream’ (2018: 94).

Open-plan offices and the flexible worker

Some buildings at the university have activity-based offices. In our building, there is a recently built open-plan office. The employees are encouraged by the managers to think positively: our office landscape is better than the activity-based office we might get in the worst case. We are expected to adapt our bodies. If the noise level becomes disruptive – if someone is talking on the phone or with a colleague – we are supposed to take our computer and books and move to smaller, lounge-like spaces with the possibility of a closed door, but where the cosiness factor is valued above the ergonomics.

What types of bodies are open office landscapes and activity-based offices built for? The answer may seem obvious: the idea behind flexible workplaces is, of course, that they are occupied by flexible workers who, influenced by the space, also become more quick-witted. Creative encounters occur with the new people who show up at the next desk, and new thinking is stimulated (Germundsson & Danermark, 2016).

Calling upon positive thinking, as in the quotation above, shifts the responsibility from the employer to the employee. This way of thinking is a method originating from positive psychology and aims to reshape negative emotions and thus reach the goal of happiness. Instead of being critical or complaining, the employee becomes a good team worker who is happy and malleable (Ehrenreich, 2009; Binkley, 2011; see also Sandell, 2016). In *Flexible Bodies*, anthropologist Emily Martin (1994) notes that flexibility has become something of a fashion in neoliberal economic discourses, and is seen as inherently positive. Service, products and processes are sold with flexibility as a seductive argument. This thinking characterises much of today’s working life. One example is in consulting and staffing companies; another is in activity-based offices. Here, it is claimed, versatile and adaptable employees work, who can quickly respond to changes as well as initiate them. Claims for rights in terms of employment or work environment are often seen as rigid and unconstrained (Martin, 1994). ‘Might it be the older employees who are a bit rigid and slow in getting used to it [the activity-based offices]?’ a young guest lecturer asked one of us with a smile in one of the university’s dining rooms.

Psychologist Agneta Sandström emphasises the importance of delimiting impressions in everyday life when burnt out (Kågström, 2016). Physical possibilities to shield from sound, light and movement are needed. When

someone else is moving in one's field of vision, even when far away, it means that extra information needs to be handled. Thus, for a person who is burnt out, working in an open-plan office is impossible (Kågström, 2016).

Just knowing that someone can interrupt me at any time makes it more difficult to concentrate. I am also told by the occupational health service to do breathing exercises and take short breaks with gymnastic movements each hour. I really do not want to do that in front of my colleagues. I have nightmares about open-plan offices, and of having to move again and again. When I began to work part-time after the first sick leave, I got a private office in a building three kilometres from my other colleagues. It is far from optimal, but the best solution at hand for the moment.

Health and mindfulness exercises, together with the use of assistant devices and medication like sleeping pills or antidepressants, are examples of self-care. 'Good citizens' are expected and disciplined to work on their bodies and minds (Foucault 1976/1990; see also Alftberg & Hansson, 2012). Like positive thinking, these exercises make us even more effective and productive (Binkley, 2011; Bornemark, 2018). Yet the mindfulness culture's goal of a life in total balance is impossible to reach, and may increase stress and anxiety (Kågström, 2016). If employees still do not fit into the changing world of work, they must take responsibility and choose to work part-time or change their job (Sandell, 2016). Again, responsibility for problems in the work environment is individualised (Kågström, 2016).

Already in 1928 Virginia Woolf (1928/2004) had emphasised that the design of the rooms we live in influences our thinking and creativity. For a person with a cognitive impairment, thinking is disturbed in an open-office landscape. For a person with a hearing impairment, it becomes even more difficult to follow a conversation because of background noise (Germundsson & Danermark, 2016). In both cases, the effort leads to increased fatigue. In the words of Ahmed (2006), the rooms put bodies in order. They function as a supportive extension of some bodies but not others. The less flexible bodies and minds that would have gone unnoticed in another type of environment suddenly become noticeable as deviant, as interrupting a conversation by asking 'What did you say?' (Germundsson & Danermark, 2016) or by asking for silence – or for a parking space. The special solutions for disabled employees described in this and the previous section, such as staying at another hotel or getting a workplace in another part of the city, instead of accessible premises for everyone, can have both social and career effects. However, our open-office landscapes affect everybody's social interactions. Creative meetings do not occur, as those who can, work at home, leading to fewer meetings than in the former cell offices.

Some bodies can benefit from flexible working life while others cannot. The question then is which bodies do not fit in. The human geographer Robyn

Longhurst (2001) writes about the pregnant body, which is difficult to control and threatens to leak. The same could be said about the aging body. But also, about the asthmatic or the diabetic body, the one whose shoulders and neck are aching, the one who does not hear or see so well, the one who is a little slow in movement or thought, has a temporarily twisted ankle or a spastic hand; all these have difficulty being fully flexible. It is hard to draw a sharp boundary between the normal and the disabled (Campbell, 2009). Functionality varies with the context and the form of the day. Accessible premises are good for large groups who are often not seen as disabled but who have temporary injuries or illnesses, or repetitive strain injuries that cause disabilities. Campbell (2009) points out that the vast majority of people are actually in the grey zone between the two socially constructed categories of disabled people and able-bodied people.

Crip time

Newly employed, I tell a colleague that I have seen the librarians taking a coffee break together each morning. She answers that that is not possible for instructors due to their workload.

Time is key in the university. Instructors' working hours are often scheduled to the minute, and working overtime in the evenings, on weekends and during holidays is fully normalised (Johnson & McRuer, 2014; Brown & Leigh, 2018; Leigh & Brown, 2020). Not even a short coffee break seems possible. According to the Swedish Work Environment Authority (AFS, 2015:4), the employer has responsibility to ensure that employees do not have an unhealthy workload. An unhealthy workload is defined as 'when job requirements exceed resources on more than a temporary basis. This imbalance becomes unhealthy if it is prolonged and if opportunities for recovery are inadequate' (AFS, 2015:4:6). These provisions are binding regulations.

However, a time study from the Swedish National Agency for Higher Education (Högskoleverket, 2008) shows that university instructors are estimated to work an average of 52–53 hours, almost the equivalent of a seven-day week. Lecturers and professors work the longest hours, about 57–58 hours a week, including 15–16 hours in the evenings or on weekends.² Thus, if fulltime work is 52–58 hours a week, being on sick leave on 50 per cent and only working 20 hours a week, with cognitive impairments that make one less efficient, leads to a considerable difference in numbers of hours worked and in amount of work done. Underlying this workload are factors such as the economisation of higher education, administrative functions that have been cut even as administrative tasks have increased and instead been placed on instructors and researchers, and constant reorganisation (such as those that cause the nightmares in the previous section) to increase economic efficiency. Reorganisations also lead to anxiety, stress and a reduced desire to work (Högskoleverket, 2008), and demand flexibility and adaptability of the employees (see also Martin, 1994). These changes are closely associated with

the introduction of neoliberal forms of governance from the private sector into the universities and other public sectors, the so-called New Public Management. To be able to control the quality and effectiveness of work it has to be documented, measured (preferably quantitatively) and evaluated. The philosopher Jonna Bornemark (2018) describes this as the growth of two parallel realities. On one hand are core activities: teaching and researching in the case of the university. On the other hand is the documentation of the core activities. Lived reality is always complex, but in the evaluations, it is only the measurable parts that count. Thus, there is a risk that the core activities have to adapt to their documentation. This development has both increased administrative workload and led to feelings of meaninglessness and ethical stress as time for core activities decreases (Bornemark, 2018).

With an increasing workload follows a need for recovery for everybody, but especially for people who are burnt out (Kågström, 2016).

When burnt out, there is a need for regular breaks and time for recovery (for example outdoor walks) during the working day. When teaching, it is customary to have 15 minutes break each hour. But when instructors and/or researchers gather it is often for two-hour meetings or seminars without breaks, or only one break if it is a three-hour seminar. The research group has a one-day seminar at a local conference hotel. When we begin again after lunch, I look out through the window and try to ‘close’ my ears. My head is already overloaded with information. I go to the restroom, and then I stay in the foyer for a while, to get time for recovery.

While the need for rest is acknowledged for students, staff are expected to work without regular breaks. Sneaking out into the foyer becomes a silent way of resisting. Campbell (2009) discusses time as a factor that stops disabled people, who often need more time in general and flexible working hours. What feminist studies researcher Alison Kafer (2013) calls ‘crip time’ is more than extra time:

[I]t requires reimagining our notions of what can and should happen in time, or recognising how expectations of ‘how long things take’ are based on very particular minds and bodies. We can then understand the flexibility of crip time as being not only an accommodation to those who need ‘more’ time but also, and perhaps especially, a challenge to normative and normalising expectations of pace and scheduling. Rather than bend disabled bodies and minds to meet the clock, crip time bends the clock to meet disabled bodies and minds.

(Kafer, 2013: 27)

Using a wheelchair implies that one needs more time to move around, given for example the lack of parking space, inaccessible public transport and the unsuitability of stairs as an alternative when lifts are full or not functioning.

Lecturing takes part in lecture halls and in buildings spread around the city. Thus, moving around is common and an imperative. For each occasion, you must bring your laptop, books and other material. Carrying around heavy and ungainly items is an obstacle for anyone, and especially for those with mobility impairments. When a couple of students with hearing loss entered one of the educational programmes, it appeared that the lecture halls were not equipped with hearing loops. Thus, movable speakers had to be collected by the lecturer and brought to the hall. When not able to carry these around, you have to make special arrangements, asking someone else to bring them for you. Such special solutions always are at risk to fail due to the human factor; this also has happened. These occasions have ended up as stressful situations, moving around and trying to find the speakers or the person who should bring them.

A solution to remove disabling conditions for some individuals (students with hearing impairments) results in disabling conditions for someone else (lecturers with mobility impairments). Such temporary, *ad hoc* solutions, aiming to compensate for rooms built for the able-bodied, result in extra workload and thus a more stressful working life. Yet, if an employee refuses to make up for inaccessibilities, there may be consequences:

On one occasion, I cancelled the lecture after waiting 20 minutes for the speakers to be delivered. I refused to give a lecture and risk discriminating against students with hearing loss. The incident quickly became known to the highest level of management at the university and I was contacted and asked to explain my decision. I felt like being reprimanded by the management.

The employee acted as a crip killjoy by disrupting one of the university's main activities, and, consequently, the lack of accessibility was made visible.

Diffuse responsibility

As our examples have shown, hindrances in the university environment are manifold. These shortcomings could be expected to be of interest to the management, yet the quote below shows the contrary:

When inaccessibilities have been highlighted, the reaction from responsible departments and staff has been that the remarks are disturbing and sometimes even unachievable. Departments send the tasks to other departments or to other institutions outside the university, i.e. the municipality or the property owners. Years have passed and the inaccessibility remains. No one raises her/his hand saying, 'I have the responsibility and I will see to it that this is solved'.

Disability studies scholar Tanya Titchkosky (2011) confirms these procedures and highlights that disability and access are entailed in bureaucratic practices that in the end exclude disabled people. Responsibility for managing accessibility issues (for example, reporting errors) is often placed as an additional task for disabled staff. It has been claimed that all energy that must be put into asking for, reminding about and finding out solutions, compensating for an inadequate environment, is also an indication that disabled faculty do not fit into higher education (Stone, Crooks & Owen, 2013). Furthermore, there are a number of invisible impairments, permanent or temporary, or invisible effects of visible impairments, which employees may not want to reveal for various reasons (Bain & Tremain, 2015; Brown & Leigh, 2018; Hannam-Swain, 2018). Coming out as a disabled person always involves a risk of being stigmatised as deviant and that the diagnosis will define the person instead of being considered part of a complex identity (Goffman, 1963/1990; see also Patrick Kermit's chapter in this volume). The person may be seen as troublesome by colleagues, students and administrative staff, as someone who creates extra workload for others, is accused of inventing, exaggerating or being lazy. In addition to the time it takes to undertake accessibility work, emotional work is also required to deal with the resistance the person encounters (Brown & Leigh, 2018; Inckle, 2018).

Conclusion: when accessibility gets stuck

Our analysis of the autoethnographies in this chapter have shown several examples of inaccessible objects and spaces in the built environment at the university: lecture halls, open-plan offices, furniture, outdoor environment and conference hotels are made for flexible and able-bodied employees. Furthermore, the organisation of work according to neoliberal forms of governance leads to parallel realities, higher demands on performance and productivity as well as an increasing administrative burden on the employees. This causes both ethical stress, and stress related to demands to become more effective.

The answers that are given to inaccessibilities are often special solutions that lead to missed social and career opportunities. The responsibility for reporting inaccessibility, for reminding about these and to find *ad hoc* solutions, becomes extra workload for disabled employees. Moreover, instead of solving the broader problems in the organisation of work, employees are encouraged to think positively and devote themselves to self-care, with the goal of working even more effectively. Thus, in both cases, the responsibility is shifted from the employer to the individual employee, who is constructed as demanding, dependent and/or deviant. An additional aspect is the diffuse responsibility for accessibility. With so many parties involved, the demands for accessibility get stuck within bureaucracy.

Based on our findings, we see ableist structures and practices within working life and the neoliberal organisation, together with the individualisation of work environment problems and diffuse responsibility, as the main obstacles

to accessibility. Accessible premises are fundamental, with the goal of finding general solutions (Brade, Schmitt & Sandell, 2014). However, a completely accessible world and universal design is impossible.³ ‘Unless paradise is paved into a parking lot, most of the earth’s surface is going to be too rough for my wheelchair,’ as author Nancy Mairs puts it (1996: 105). Different needs, depending on type of impairment, may be in conflict. Thus, awareness is also needed of invisible and ableist institutionalised practices and able-bodied standards that are taken for granted. The focus has to shift from the problematised outsider to how ableism, built on the idea of the normal worker, with a normal body, normal way of thinking and feeling, and normal pace of work, excludes some. Crip time is about flexible university organisations and employers, not flexible employees. The inflexibility and the ever-increasing demands on efficiency of the work organisation stops already-disabled persons and is in itself disabling. Thus, flexibility has to be introduced on several levels at the university. If the starting point is taken to be ‘disabled peoples’ unreasonableness and burdensomeness’ (Sandahl, 2018) when organising and rebuilding working life, the need for individual special solutions would decrease, and employees would not have to disclose their impairments.

We are still waiting for the person responsible for accessibility to raise his or her hand. Meanwhile, is it possible to speed up change towards an accessible working life? Bornemark (2018) suggests forms of micro-resistance, such as prioritising core activities over administrative tasks. Some employees make the individual choice to quit, but when many do it at the same time, as we have seen in the Swedish care sector, it becomes a political issue that drives change (Bornemark, 2018). The latter could be seen as an example of being crip killjoys. Saying ‘I am not willing’ is an act of resistance. It may encompass the refusal to work in inaccessible buildings or a refusal of self-care techniques that have as their only aim, helping to become a happy, flexible and productive employee. Johnson and McRuer (2014) admit that it is sometimes easier to say ‘I can’t’, referring to the impairment. However, we believe that the possibility to say ‘I don’t want’ also depends on the individual’s social position (Mulinari & Sandell, 1999). It may be difficult for a lone instructor or researcher to be a crip killjoy, and a refusal to be willing and able to face resistance can result in temporary employment not being extended. When working on this chapter, we certainly realised the difficulties in being a crip killjoy. In some cases, decisions had to be taken quickly. Being in a hall full of expectant students, it was difficult to choose a path that would affect many students negatively. The same ambivalence occurred when there was a chance colleagues would be affected. In order not to place the responsibility on the individual, with the punishments that, as we have seen, may follow, we imagine that a collective ‘we are not willing’ from those with the protections of employment, and those who are permanently or temporarily disabled and their allies, is more realisable and effective.

Notes

- 1 From the derogatory term 'cripple'.
- 2 The study was based on diaries kept during one week by 106 instructors and leaders.
- 3 See, e.g., Apelmo (2016) for a discussion on universal design.

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