

Citation for published version

Pié Balaguer, A. [Asunción] & Planella, J. [Jordi] (2020). Queer, crip and social pedagogy. A critical hermeneutic perspective. In Gracia Trujillo Barbadillo & Moira Pérez (ed.). *Queer Epistemologies in Education : Luso-Hispanic Dialogues and Shared Horizons* (p. 65-80). Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. doi: 10.1007/978-3-030-50305-5_5

DOI

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-50305-5_5

Handle

<http://hdl.handle.net/10609/150417>

Document Version

This is the Accepted Manuscript version.

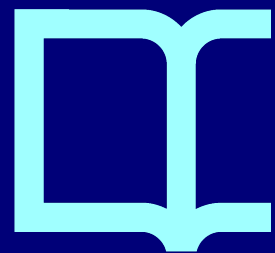
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Queer, crip and social pedagogy. A critical hermeneutic perspective.

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Phenomenologically speaking, flashpoints are lived phenomena. To experience a flash is to experience a moment of interruption or suspension in normal behavior, perception, and everyday experiential flow. The flash erupts, temporarily sending an affective surge throughout one's extended sensorium.

Travis et al. (2018: 3)

Introduction

Queer perspective has had a significant influence on the theory and practice of contemporary pedagogy, reworking part of its backbone. This hints at an unbridled power in queer applied to the field of social education, a power which goes beyond the diverse sexuality issues of its subjects and one which could open up endless perspectives of our understanding of human diversity itself. In this paper, we re-examine social pedagogy from a queer perspective (first intersection), taking into account other closely-related perspectives which have an influence on the way we understand and work in education. We go on to explore crip theory and its power and relation to queer pedagogy (second intersection). The aim of our approach is to break with certain normative frameworks in education which are in fact heteronormative and rely on the normativization of their subjects. Continuing in this direction, we are interested in how queer and crip came to touch down in the specific field of social pedagogy. Adopting various positions and via a number of routes, we attended epistemic academic gatherings perpetrated at the heart of activist movements, outside the proverbial closet of the educational establishment, to reveal different ways of thinking about pedagogy in the real world. In essence, the connection between queer and pedagogy, and later on with crip, enables us to think and act in unconventional, non-hegemonic ways and propose a new framework for diversity and for humanity as a whole.

Queer pedagogy: resemanticizing a symbolic universe

We agree with Ricardo Llamas that thinking about the world from the perspective of queer theory has to do with what can be defined as 'twisted theory', a theory situated at the convergence point of authors like Fernand Deligny (2015) and Michel Foucault (2018), and which sees this intersection as a rupture space, a narrow strip from which it is possible to think in a different way (1998: 23). Over the last twenty years, the connection between queer theory and pedagogy has become clear, resulting in what is now termed queer pedagogy. This marriage of terms, which generates a symbolic universe beyond the semantic dimensions, has not always been evident, and has frequently been viewed as something strange, dangerous and undesirable. The mix of sexual diversity and education can be threatening to some, especially the

ultraconservative and the narrowminded, who feel that placing the word 'queer' in the hands of educators is to pervert or twist education and those who benefit from it.

What happens in the mechanisms of education is a clear reflection of what happens in society: those who use, think about or define their body in a way that some consider unnatural are stigmatized, labelled and condemned. Trujillo suggests that, "to be queer is to be strange, different, escape from heteronormativity, from gender and sexual binary. An 'effeminate' boy who likes to play French skipping with the girls in the school playground, or a 'tomboy' who whiles away the hours kicking a ball, does not conform to the behaviour expected of a boy or a girl" (2013). The manipulation of bodies – and what they represent or may represent – gains particular momentum in pedagogical practices. The scope of educational policies related to difference is astonishingly limited. How do these policies understand difference? Who decides, grants, classifies, distributes or redistributes education to those considered different?

This paper, from a Latino research context (we use this classification to indicate the subject community of Spanish-speaking countries), has led the authors to take part in research 'hothouses', congresses, master's and doctoral classes, thesis supervision sessions, field work, and travels in Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Argentina and Spain. As Flores puts it, it deals with "a chasm with the contours of Latin America and Spanish-speaking countries, territories with decolonization disputes in the fabric of their histories, their experiences, their bodies and their epistemologies" (Flores, 2013: 183, author's own translation). And on these journeys, first initiated in a paper entitled *Transgender Pedagogies* (Planella and Pié, 2017), we come across something situated at the heart of humanity, in the mechanisms that govern the parameters of difference exclusion anthropologies: normalism. Normalism as a phobia towards bodies not considered normal or normative – a phenomenon too widespread in contemporary society – has caused irreparable damage, since it has been the standard which has ordered and established what is permissible and what is not, the standard which has set the pace for the classification and organization of groups and societies. We can emphatically state that normalism is a deeply-rooted element of our societies, and is in fact what orders, guides and manages them. If we agree with the notion that sexual orientation and gender identity are essential aspects of people's lives, we can understand the importance of introducing this perspective into educational policies and practices (CLADE, 2014). It is important because it is precisely during childhood, in institutions and educational mechanisms, that negative perceptions of difference are engendered and consolidated. Direct or indirect discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is the order of the day and one of the principal causes of distress and suffering in children with "excessive" corporeality¹.

¹ This situation explains the existence in Spain since 2015 of the OASIS Project, a space in which adolescents with diverse expressions and identities of gender and sexuality can meet and socialize. Its objective is to create a safe recreation space where young people can enjoy their condition of diversity without being subjected to normalizing pressures. The project enjoys the collaboration of TransFamilia and AMPGIL and receives funding from official institutions including Barcelona City Council, Barcelona Provincial Council and the Government of Catalonia. This is a segregated space for the exclusive use of LGBTI young people who need to navigate their adolescence without denying their sexual condition. The idea is for young people to spend a few days of relaxation in a safe place where they don't have to think about what they say and do to fit in with the norm. Heteropatriarchal and normalization pressures were countered with the building of parallel spaces in what is now a historic initiative within the LGBTI movement. In other areas – disability, for instance – initiatives like these have been strongly criticized and opposed. It is argued that LGBTI young people choose to inhabit their bodies in a diverse way, but that people with disabilities do not choose, just as they do not choose segregated spaces like these. Self-segregation and imposed segregation are among the typical paths used in social pedagogy to manage

Ricard Huerta, teacher, professor of the teaching of art and LGBTI activist, says that “by coming out of the closet we defend the rights of people, especially minorities, who until very recently (and even still today) have been treated with aggression by a sector of society reluctant to overcome old traumas and complexes” (2015: 25). This also happens, and to an even greater extent, in the field of educational practice, where an education professional who is open about their sexual diversity is not always welcomed. Unfortunately, this negative way of thinking about and understanding queerness in educational practices continues to shape many agendas and programmes in our country’s educational centres. It is precisely in this radical pedagogical position that we can place the thinking of Val Flores.

We came across Val Flores, almost by chance, in a book by Alejandra Castilla (*Ars Disyecta*, 2014), in which she affirms that: “Opposed to all hygienism of language, the proletariat is contaminated by the most turbulent winds of the imagination. Deformed creatures, monsters, polyform sexualities, hilarious vegetation, inaccessible fauna, all lurk in the scenery of language. Every dreamlike liquid perfumes the earthly environment and attacks the docility of the day. A collage of imagined things enhances their lewd vocation” (2010, author’s own translation). We asked ourselves, who could Valeria Flores be? Why had we never read anything by her? We began to investigate and found that she was an Argentine teacher – but not from Buenos Aires, from Neuquén in the deep south. A biography that accompanies one of her publications reads: “Teacher of primary education who works in a primary school in the city of Neuquén (Neuquén province, Argentina). She is the author of many articles on sexual diversity” (Flores, 2008). This is one of the key elements we focus on in this paper: analysing how a teacher – who specializes in sexual diversity issues, and from an embodied perspective – thinks about and experiences queer pedagogy.

As we explored her writings more closely, one of the things that surprised us was the way she worked to produce knowledge: by asking endless, incessant questions, Flores deals with the question of queer pedagogy in a remarkable, embodied manner. The following questions illustrate this:

1. What social – and sexual – secrets does school perpetuate? What secrets does it specifically engender? What silences flow through our educational practices? Whose desires are disrespected by the ignorance these secrets create? Which elements of acquired knowledge lead to this ignorance? (2008).
2. Is it possible to imagine a staffroom in which conversations among teachers about gay sexuality or trans identity are not the object of continual derision, and lesbian identity is not consigned to an unbreakable silence? (2015).

difference. In our opinion, these do nothing to break with binary notions and institutional divides, though they can sometimes respond to an inescapable need for survival and dignity; utterly inadequate if we aspire to transform the world we live in, but undoubtedly needed for greater well-being until we achieve that transformation.

3. How is the heterosexual knowledge regime connected to a teacher's own identity as a teacher? In what way do hegemonic constructions of school knowledge by bodies of teachers who identify as lesbians play a part? (2013a).

These writings by Flores, with their focus on queer pedagogy, which we can classify as "a thorn in the side of pedagogy", are incisive proposals that seek to influence discussion on critical issues and wedge their way into global hegemonic ways of thinking and practising pedagogy. And this investigation/reflection is radically embodied. Flores bases her writings on her own life (which she describes as precarious, sexually dissident and with inappropriate gender expression), her own body, her day-to-day practice in a classroom with children, and the positions and resistance activities she engages in to be able to practise as a teacher while identifying herself as she does. This is how she expresses it:

On the basis that queer theory is not a homogenous and coherent body of content, but rather a set of rules and dynamic methodologies useful for reading, thinking and incorporating into everyday life, for me the practice of teaching has been – and continues to be – an incessant movement of reflection and construction, of working against my own thoughts. (2013: 216, author's own translation)

The themes that run through her work and her mode of understanding are directly linked to sensitive, embodied pedagogy. It deals with questions about childhood distress in pedagogic mechanisms, the pathologizing and medicalizing of those childhoods, the desertion of children by education professionals, the absence of passions in schools, the nonexistence of sexual diversity in the pedagogic practices of schools today, the infantilization of pupils (where the attitude is that they're too young to know about sexuality, much less sexual diversity), heteronormativity as the prevailing classroom culture, etc. As she proposes: "Schools cannot be hostile to reflection that promotes other modes of thinking and inhabiting this world. The promotion of ignorance, the lack of knowledge as a discursive industry, is an essential element of any exterminatory regime. We cannot continue to consent to all this, feigning ignorance, or pretending that nothing's going on" (2008). And it is right that, as part of that "cannot consent", we must join in from our position of subordinates, take the floor, stand up and shout out who we are with pride.

Queer pedagogy, therefore, is opening up and renewing itself by introducing these other modes of thinking and inhabiting the world. This new sensitivity (including new corporeal cartography) mounts an attack against the divisions generated by modernity and, in particular, against Western definitions of self. Schools and pedagogical institutions as a whole continue to focus on the privileged subject of modernity, justifying the productivity and profitability of bodies. Crip theory can be used as a tool to continue to think about these other possible paths of resistance to normalization and openness to other modes of being in the world.

Queer-crip intersection

The second intersection of queer pedagogy presented in this paper focuses on what some authors have defined as crip theory. These include McRuer (2006), who denounces the alleged neutrality of *ability* (able bodies), in the sense that not having a disability is conceived as the natural state. For this reason we have what the author calls able-bodiedness, a concept inspired by Adrienne Rich's original contributions on "obligatory heterosexuality", which draw attention to heterosexuality as a system. Thus, able-

bodiedness can also be understood as a system that feeds and fabricates ability as desirable and disability as undesirable. This system supports the tragic model of disability, benevolent policies, eugenics, incapacitation and sexual repression, to name but a few widespread practices. Queer theory provides crip theory with strong epistemological support for detecting the modes in which this able-bodiedness is engendered. McRuer uses the gender performativity of Judith Butler to understand how reiteration and repetitions are part of our obligatory ability, another ideal which is never perfectly produced. His ideas on compulsory able-bodiedness are associated with this, and even more so because able-bodiedness is the antechamber of the dominant forms of gender and sexuality, but what's more because the embodiment of that ability is heterosexual. Like Butler, McRuer also seeks to show how non-normative bodies and minds are oppressed within a system of compulsory able-bodiedness. We could also add that normative subjects also suffer the demands of ability throughout their lives.

According to García-Santesmases (2017), queer-crip or crip-trans-feminist alliances are the protagonists of a change in the repertory of activism in Spain. Between 2012 and 2015, the *Yes, we fuck!* project inspired this meeting of political affinities that later resulted in other common projects. The primary focus of these alliances was sexuality and desire. Today, these projects have made visible the sexuality of non-normative bodies and helped to reverse the sexual denial and repression so entrenched in the disabled sector. Undoubtedly, the field of social practices has changed in favour of other considerations regarding sexuality and disability. Erotic and sexual companionship services have proliferated, along with greater professional priority being given to providing a satisfactory institutional response. The controversies stirred up by certain segregated services, and the need for further, more extensive ethical, aesthetic and political work on disability, are another question. All of this far exceeds an exclusively sexual approach and aspires to a much broader labour of social transformation, which we will examine below.

The postanthropocentric approach of crip theory and social pedagogy

Following Britzman (2016), what is needed to reject the silenced and obstinately silent heterosexual educational curriculum? Or, in terms of crip, what do we have to do to reject the silent able-bodiedist educational curriculum? If the world is divided according to gender binary, it is equally divided along able/disabled lines. The problems that ensue from this binary division (in terms of expulsion from the world that defines itself by what it is not or by what it lacks) are crying out to education to overcome these boundaries and limitations, some of which have divided humankind, internally and externally. Relating queer theory to pedagogy is a project with a broader scope than the mere inclusion of gays and lesbians in the classroom. It is part of an ethical and aesthetic project that assimilates difference as a basis for policy and community, and addresses the denial of the body in the metaphysics of Western philosophy, understanding that this denial stems from an injurious relationship with human vulnerability.

We cannot address this question without considering the peripheral and problematic place occupied by the body in Western modernity. In an interesting paper entitled *Crip posthumanism and Native American Indian postanthropocentrism: keys to a bodily perspective in science*, Moya and Bergua (2018) present a comparative analysis between Native American Indians and Westerners. The essence of this work is that, while the scientific naturalism of our world teaches us that humans and non-humans are physically very similar, and that this similarity can be represented objectively by science, the Native

American Indians' belief in animism means that, for them, humans and non-humans are physically very different. Perhaps immeasurably different forms of knowledge emerge from these distinctions. These opposing modes of conceiving the human body (*körper*) in relation to that of other animals conditions our concept of the human soul and its transactions.

The Western construct is that we have the same physical nature with culturally diverse origins; the Native American Indians, on the other hand, propose a single culture with numerous different physical natures. Thus, if 'cultural relativism' and 'multiculturalism' were invented by Westerners to enable them to coexist with human diversity, the Native American Indians developed a 'multinaturalism' with their 'perspectivism' (Moya and Bergua, 2018). In essence, the West conceived a common biological base and a distinction of souls. At the same time, the body is understood as an isolated thing. The body is nothing and has no importance, among other reasons because it is precisely what makes us no different to animals. Our need to distinguish ourselves from animals nourished our denial of the body and our conception of it as a mere receptacle. The problem for us, then, is one of communication. Since the body does not communicate with anything and is not a channel for union with others, the tendency is towards homogenization as a way of resolving this lack of communication. For the Native American Indians, however, the body communicates and is a channel for connecting with other souls. The problem is, then, the distinction or non-confusion of the soul. For this reason, the body is fundamental to all members of the community, serving as a reminder of what they share and what they are. This centrality of the body, conceived as a communicative bridge, connects with life and the universe. It is easy to understand how this produces completely different world views of the human and the non-human, the routes to resolving the two problems being entirely different.

The challenge presented is therefore how to connect souls which are completely separated from each other. This preoccupation is what explains in part the tendency to culturally homogenize through uniformity. In other words, the homogenization mechanisms used in education are designed to conduct the souls of pupils to a common cultural place, at the same time controlling them and erasing their differences (Moya and Bergua, 2018). From this emerges the denial of some radically different bodies in a rejection of the communicative impact they may have on others. This denial of the body at the same time enables the similarity with other species to be obscured.

What is interesting about this question is its ability to help us understand the origins and the educational and social consequences of the oblivion and denial of the body. Crip theory has made a contribution to new thinking on the centrality of bodies and their role in the transformation of the world. Equally, it contributes to breaking down a certain notion of humanity, perpetuated in the West, of what we are in relation to the rest of the natural world. Recovering the centrality of the body enables us to review our connection to life, vulnerability, and others as a whole (Planella, 2017; Pié, 2014). Placing the body at the centre affords an opportunity to review basic human principles and, in particular, to understand how the denial of vulnerability (by denying the body) has led us to the natural and human disaster we are currently confronted with (Pié, 2019). In this respect, it is no exaggeration to say that we have the opportunity to construct a posthumanism which goes beyond technological references and which the postulates of crip theory contribute to. Nor is it a coincidence that these crip postulates emerge from a certain

conception of disability and that this gives still more impact to the centrality of the vulnerability we invoke.

If the social model of disability is part of the journey towards crip postulates, these postulates exceed the social model itself by aspiring to have an impact that is revolutionary as opposed to merely reformist. In the words of McRuer:

Crip offers a cultural model of disability. As such, crip theory is opposed to both the medical model, which renders disability inseparable from the pathology, the diagnosis, or the treatment/elimination; and the social model, developed to a great extent in the United Kingdom. The social model suggests that 'disability' is to be understood as situated, not in the bodies or minds of people, but in an inaccessible environment which must be adapted to them [...]. With the focus on excess, defiance and extravagant transgression, crip offers a model of disability more culturally generative – and politically radical – than a social model that is more or less purely reformist – and not revolutionary. (McRuer interviewed in Moscoso and Arnau, 2016: 138, author's own translation)

The social model does not fully overcome the binary conception it has of disability itself, leaving the deficit tied to the body (understanding the body as a material, given, natural thing) and the disability to the social world. It is crip theory that truly enables us to give a different resonance to the body and a different way of expressing that body. In this regard, we are thinking about the exercise of revealing these modes, these ways of experiencing that do not reduce bodies to a particular way of inhabiting them; rather the opposite, the ability to appreciate the plurality of ways of being-in-the-world and inhabiting bodies, and therefore their complexity and irreducibility. On the other hand, as we were saying, we are also interested in giving an account of the connection/communication between bodies that the use of abjection illustrates in its social impact.

In response to the medical model of disability, geared towards what is considered the universal ideal of a healthy and able body, where the emphasis is on the enormous disparities in the social model (which treats disability as a social category irrespective of group, diversity and multifunctionality), in the 1990s the crip movement began to generate a body of criticism of corporeal standards. If disability is merely the result of social and environmental restrictions that incapacitate certain organisms, and a deficiency is a simple, aseptic statistical deviation from a naturalized standard, vulnerability can no longer be included in a list or catalogue of naturalized characteristics (Moya and Bergua, 2018). The link between disability and deficiency is broken, and autonomy, believed to be inherent to human beings, no longer finds categories to which to anchor itself. This is taken a step further by feminist works that highlight vulnerability as a universal condition of existence, rather than one solely associated with certain groups. The result is an understanding of humans as radically interdependent beings. If the construct of naturalized disability no longer stands up to scrutiny, neither do those of autonomy, independence and the association of vulnerability with a select few.

The understanding of disability or deficiency as social constructs does not mean treating the body as a mere social body. Rewriting deficiency, illness, suffering and disability is not a denial of these; it simply means the generation of meanings (or non-meanings) not based on ignoring them. The simple fact of rewriting them makes it difficult to deny them. Crip therefore makes it possible to re-examine the direction taken in the West with respect to our management of the body, suffering, illness and vulnerability. And it is no exaggeration to say that overcoming the current denial of these issues could have an

explosive effect on capitalism. The pedagogical value of the rewriting of bodies as a gesture of generation of new meanings is therefore overwhelming, not only from a position of abjection, but also from symbolic overtures to plurality that enable awareness of different ways of inhabiting our bodies (experiencing, enduring or enjoying them).

The difference between queer theory and crip theory can be seen in the transversality of the body. While crip theory and queer theory both remind us of the denial of the body, crip theory broadens the significance of the body because its work goes beyond sexual and gender boundaries. Queer theory recognizes the body as fundamental to the identification of identity issues, but has not so far viewed the body as a gateway to the understanding of individual and collective existence as a whole. Although the crip movement emerged from the context of discussion about the autonomy of the disabled, it is strongly influenced by queer theory's discovery of the body. Crip's principal achievement is the dismantling of the socially constructed framework of dependency, deficiency and disability, proposing the construction of other connections and deploying other rationales. It has also contributed to dismantling the notion of autonomy, highlighting the interdependence of the human condition. Notwithstanding, its most important contribution has been its commitment to corporeality. The problem is that our civilization lacks the habits needed to put it into practice. Moreover, though functional differences magnify corporeality more than sexuality, many corporeal dimensions still remain unattended (Moya and Bergua, 2018).

Final notes on crip-queer pedagogy

Essentially, both queer and crip highlight the centrality of the body, but the former does so fundamentally in the sexual terrain. The centrality of the body in crip culture could lead us to understand the world, relationships and ourselves without creating so many ruptures and divisions. This is the urgent, revolutionary postanthropocentric world view we are invited to share. Education cannot be restricted to the cultivation of the soul, but must be about placing the body at the centre in order to deconstruct the binary notions that divide humankind, discussing how we have defined ourselves up to now (same body as animals, different soul) in order to address alternative notions (same soul as animals, different bodies, the body as a vehicle to transform the soul), and continually reviewing how we define ourselves without affirming what we are. The education of the future should be called upon to embrace all of this.

Crip perspective is a cultural model of disability² that recognizes disability as a site of phenomenological value, but which is not synonymous with social disablement processes. In other words, the stakes are different in crip culture. Moreover, as McRuer (2018) reminds us, crip adequately describes what we might see as non-normative or non-representative disabilities (disabilities, let's say, that would never fall under the umbrella of the universal disabled access symbol); bodies that fall outside the hegemonic designation, causing it to break down. These are undocumented disabilities (Mollow, 2014) or 'boundary' cases: threshold personality, anxiety, chronic pain, HIV, transgender identity and a variety of other forms of embodiment that fall outside the normative designation of disability. Crip is able to address forms of embodiment or states of mind

² Integrated dance projects, cripple porn documentaries, performance and participatory cabarets in collaboration with other activist networks are just a few examples of crip dynamics in Spain, particularly in Catalonia.

that may be superior to the disabled/able-bodied binary commonly used in the construction of dichotomous realities. This also means that “crip is a critical term that, in various times and places, must be displaced by other terms” (McRuer, 2018) such as queer, trans, freak, etc. For McRuer, we are still collectively discovering what crip could be and what the verb *to crip* could mean. The term is therefore better defined by what it can potentially provoke (as a process) rather than by what it is in itself.

Notwithstanding, we encounter two profoundly subversive questions in crip. On the one hand, as we have already indicated, we find the centrality of the body; modes of inhabiting the body; and rewritings, meanings and openings, particularly in terms of pain, illness and vulnerability. On the other, we find radical criticism of able-bodiedism and, consequently, of neoliberal capitalist social organization. This leads us to question the centrality of work currently favoured by schools and other educational institutions geared towards the promise of employability. From this will emerge a critical pedagogy opposed to this centrality of work that will opt for a change of course in favour of life and caring for life.³

All of this shows us how the crip approach intersects with and feeds back into weakness and vulnerability. McRuer proposes the following: “Crip and crippling can certainly be positioned alongside a range of terms that represent the need for new or multiple languages for thinking about disability” (McRuer, 2018). Embracing weakness and vulnerability involves recovering an element of disability denied by the social model, but without succumbing to biomedical semantics. Weakness and vulnerability are also key when a concept that addresses a broad range of experiences of chronic illness, senectitude or dependence is still needed to enable us to produce unedited narratives about bodies and affliction (Pié, 2019). Weakness has been denied to the whole of the population and this denial has produced multiple aggressions. In reality, the concept of disability itself is a by-product of this generalized denial. Crip enables discussion of precisely this denial of weakness, and of the appropriation of the management of vulnerability by the biomedical and commercial models. By reappropriating human vulnerability in its entirety, we are able to give it other resonances, with a greater connection to life and with the body at the centre of the lives of humans. In reality, crip enables us to discuss a number of erroneous principles maintained in Western human civilization which are profoundly destructive of diversity (both human and non-human) and of life altogether. Ultimately, crip perspective enables us to discuss the fundamental principles of Western civilization and dismantles able-bodiedist, commercial and normative educational institutions.

[...] I am dreaming the biggest disabled dream of my life – dreaming not just of a revolutionary movement in which we are not abandoned but of a movement in which we lead the way. With all of our crazy, adaptive-devised, loving kinship and commitment to each other, we will leave no one behind as we roll, limp, stim, sign, and move in a million ways towards cocreating the decolonial living future. I am dreaming like my life depends on it. Because it does. (Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, 2018).

³ Thus, a feminist schools project recently launched in Barcelona includes a queer-crip declaration of intent to reform the Catalan educational system. One of its intentions is to place the value of care and life at the centre of educational panorama, to the detriment of capital, accumulation, exploitation and the instrumentalization of the body.

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