A call to rethink the Global North university

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A call to rethink the Global North university: Mobilising disabled students' experiences through the encounter of Critical Disability Studies and Epistemologies of the South

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Abstract
In the 1970s, disabled people and other marginalised social groups battled an exclusionary Global North university. Disability Studies emerged from those struggles as epistemologies shaped around a Westernised understanding of disability and inequalities, based on dialectic visions of progress and subjective liberation. Today, the advance of neoliberalism in universities, and its connection with colonial legacies, are embedded in different historical contingencies, and disabled students face new forms of discrimination. By merging analytical approaches from post-structural Critical Disability Studies and Epistemologies of the South, this article draws upon interviews with disabled students conducted in an Italian university to explore how neoliberal and capitalistic practices exclude certain knowledges and modalities of being university students. Through disabled students' experiences, the article advances epistemologies that encompass processes of decolonisation and de-ableism of the university and argues for the Global North university to be an institution that can democratically reconcile polyhedral subjective possibilities of being.

Disabled people as a discriminated social group have a long history of struggles against an exclusionary university establishment. Back in the late 1960s, disabled students' battles at Berkeley led to the enactment of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Danforth, 2018); in England, the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) challenged the hegemony of medical knowledge in defining disabled bodies and became the hotbed

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of scholars that founded Disability Studies; in Italy, battles for more inclusive universities saw students rebelling against the system – with the student at the time (later Professor) Enzo Rutigliano throwing his crutch out of a university window during a protest (personal conversation). As excluded groups, disabled people, and other discriminated groups such as women and people of colour, fought against a marginalising, unequal and hierarchical capitalist system, mobilised by narratives of progress, dialectical revolution and subjective liberation. While Disability Studies in the Global North questioned rationales that were constructing disabled people as unproductive citizens reliant on state support, the North/South divide emerged to capture a broader system of inequalities and dependencies (Castro-Gómez, 2002), with 'Southern' countries broadly defined as 'those historically conquered or controlled by modern imperial powers, leaving a continuing legacy of poverty, economic exploitation and dependence' (Meekosha, 2011: 669).

More than fifty years have passed since those struggles. Today a neoliberal reason, with its global market-driven agendas and accelerated performative pace, is exposing old exclusions and creating new inequalities (Lander, 2002). Universities in the Global North are central in mobilising such processes (Restrepo, 2018). Despite ongoing discourses around decolonisation and de-ableisation, on the one hand, Eurocentric, Westernised scientific canons are still considered the only true knowledge produced (Castro-Gómez, 2007; Mbembe, 2016) disregarding indigenous expertise. On the other hand, disabled people are to adapt to a pervasive ableist norm (Castrodale, 2017; Dolmage, 2017) that continues to cast them as anti-capitalist bodies and the 'other' of university performativity.

An increasing number of scholars within the field of Critical Disability Studies (CDS) are starting to address these issues. In the same way Disability Studies emerged from previous battles, today CDS's struggles are connected to the workings of ableism, as 'a socially constructed complex system of disempowerment which intersects with, and is just as pervasive as, other systems of oppression' (Miles et al., 2017). CDS advocates for a 'different articulation of temporalities' (Kafer, 2013: 28), which defies the linear narrative of progress and 'ableist expectations of "normal" [academic] orientations and timespans' (Sheppard, 2020: 39). By doing so, CDS also denounces the Eurocentric character of Disability Studies, and calls for scholarship that includes the struggles of disabled people in the Global South (Connell, 2011; Goodley et al., 2019; Meekosha and Shuttleworth, 2009). Meanwhile, decolonisation studies 'seek[s] to come to terms with the ways in which hegemonic forces of colonisation insidiously pervade the Global South knowledge systems' (Appadurai, 2001 in Chataika, 2012: 265), and to 'decolonize the logic of coloniality that translated differences into values' (Mignolo, 2011: xxvii). These processes are intrinsically connected with epistemological and ontological struggles at university and beyond. Santos (2004, 2007, 2018) operationalises these struggles in the Epistemologies of the South, looking at 'the production and validation of knowledges anchored in the experiences of resistance of all those groups that have systematically suffered injustices, oppression, and destruction caused by capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy' (Santos, 2018: 1).

Theoretical approaches that call for attention to the intersection of race and disability (Annamma et al., 2016), the merging of CDS and Postcolonial Studies (Ghai, 2012), and

that look at the connections between the two (Barker and Murray, 2013; Grech, 2015), have been exploring these connections and calling for action. In this article, I respond to this call by following 'some powerful intellectual work based on cross-fertilization' (Connell, 2019: 166) and 'trans-culturalisation' of knowledge (Castro-Gómez, 2007), in an attempt to do what Santos (2007: 23) calls 'an alternative thinking of alternatives'. Aware of Sherry's (2007: 16) warning about the dangers of abusing the 'rhetorical connections that exist between disability and post-colonialism', I do not intend to compare experiences, pain, historical atrocities and injustices as 'symbols of the oppressions' that occur in completely different contexts. Rather, I acknowledge both the calls for 'decolonising' Disability Studies and the need to 'incorporate the role of the global North in "disabling" the global South' (Meekosha, 2011: 668), and add a new strand of collaboration between CDS and Decolonial Studies scholars. Drawing upon disabled students' strategies and beliefs in a Global North university in Italy, I advance the possibility of enabling alternative epistemologies informed by 'indigenous knowledge, which in many cases, is neglected or misrepresented' (Chataika, 2012: 253), and that capture the diversity of those subjective experiences made non-existent by a capitalist and neoliberal conformation of the university. Mindful of Santos (2018) understanding of the Epistemologies of the South as political and epistemic, rather than geographical, the article aims to suggest potential ways to reinvent the Global North university as a space that promotes ecologies of knowledge and ontological diversity by merging disability expertise and processes of decolonisation (Grech, 2015).

The article first presents the changes in Disability Studies and the university over the last few decades. It then attempts to formulate an alternative theoretical analytical framework that merges a Foucauldian approach to the subject and ethics, post-structural CDS and Epistemologies of the South to both challenge Eurocentric understandings of knowledge, time and care, and formulate an epistemological space in which disabled students' experiences can become 'the alternatives from the alternative'.

Neoliberal context, modernist understanding

Following the upheavals of the late 1960s, universities began to open their doors to students from non-traditional backgrounds. In Italy, policy no. 110, issued in 1969, was a brisk emergency decree that allowed students from all types of schools, including vocational schools, to access higher education, beginning the transition of universities from elitist to mass institutions. Giving the increasing role of education in people's life chances, and inspired by the Italian Constitution, which granted the right to education to all citizens, regardless of their social backgrounds, abilities, race, ethnicity and gender, the joint struggles allowed for widening participation policies to begin to respond to disabled people's requests to be allowed to become productive citizens.

Framed by an Eurocentric and modernist episteme – here intended as 'a way of understanding the world which is specific to a time and place' (Kendall and Wickham, 1999: 67; see also Foucault, 1972) – which emerged during the Enlightenment, these struggles were theoretically mobilised by a stark binary understanding of reason and nature, and body and mind (Connell, 2011; Tremain, 2001). This division was reiterated in the production of knowledge, which was 'supposed to be universal and independent of context,

detach[ing] . . . the known from the knower . . . as ontological a priori' (Mbembe, 2016: 32; see also Lander, 2002). Connell (2011: 1370) defines it as a 'biomedical model of causation', denouncing the 'ahistorical classifications of bodies' and 'professional power over marginalised groups'. The bio-social construction of disability set forth by the Social Model of Disability (Oliver, 1990) also reflected these divisions, defining impairment as biological deficit and disability as 'something imposed on top of impairments', which makes disabled people 'unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society' (UPIAS, 1976: 4). However, the existence of a single Truth, to be objectively discovered, was immanent to social processes and promoted a linear understanding of history as progress (Lander, 2000). As such, continuous struggle would have eventually 'liberated' bodies and minds from the oppressor, and made them legitimate citizens and contributors to society (Barnes et al., 1999).

Fast-forwarding fifty years, while inclusion and equality of opportunities are integral to today's universities' agendas, a market-driven neoliberal reason is globally redesigning relations of power across countries in both the Global North and South. The enactment of comprehensive redistributive policies supporting disabled people's social inclusion (such as the 1992 Framework Law in Italy) is endangered by a neoliberal reason as a set of modalities of thinking and acting which promote an entirely new governing rationality, whereby everything is 'economized' (Mbembe, 2016: 39). A 'global economy of knowledge' (Connell, 2019; Lander, 2002; Restrepo, 2018), which sees a withdrawal of the state in favour of market-driven competition between subjects, institutions and states (Lazzarato, 2009), has weakened the welfare state and favoured processes of privatisation, inevitably affecting disability services and disabled people's lives (Connell, 2011).

The inclusive discourse and the workings of neoliberal reason are evident in the positioning of universities in the global context (Castro-Gómez, 2007; Restrepo, 2018). On the one hand, they became increasingly inclusive institutions on paper, by relying on charters and policies (see the Disability Discriminaiton Act and then 2010 Equality Act in the United Kingdom, and the Americans with Disabilities Act in the United States) to promote equality, liberation of curricula and students' diversity. In Italy, law no. 17 issued in 1999 granted disabled students at university special support and individually tailored arrangements in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment upon submission of medical certification of their disability. On the other hand, however, universities are increasingly growing as 'large systems of authoritative control, standardization, gradation, accountancy, classification, credits and penalties' (Mbembe, 2016: 30). Caught up in global competitions geared towards attracting financial and human capital, they brand themselves as attractive by boasting of the number of enrolments of students from non-traditional backgrounds, eventually inscribing inclusion into an economic discourse (Peruzzo, 2020). In this neoliberal university, exclusions and inequalities persist despite the narration of progress that fuelled the previous wave of struggles. The Rhodes Must Fall movements led by Black students in 2015, first in South Africa and then in Oxford (United Kingdom) against the 'racist and bloody project of British colonialism' (Chigudu, 2020, 303) and the report on disabled students' discrimination in higher education recently published by the Disabled Student Network (2020) are instances of how capitalism is still deeply connected both to colonialism (Mignolo, 2011) and ableism (Dolmage, 2017; Meekosha and Shuttleworth, 2009).

   These recurring discriminations are currently addressed through theories that draw upon the epistemic regime of understanding of the Global North, first because 'the globalisation of neoliberal capitalism has extended this logic of disability [and profit] around the world' (Connell, 2011: 1376). Second, because problems and solutions to this situation are framed within universities in countries that previously were 'centres of overseas empires and now the "core" of the global economy' (Connell, 2011: 1371; see also Castro-Gómez, 2007). Third, as Restrepo (2018), following Quijano (2000), aptly puts it, because universities have become privileged apparatuses that naturalise Eurocentrism by colonising knowledge, in such way that colonialism (and its power hierarchies) can be relentlessly regenerated. In the next section, I attempt to provide a provisional framework for this reformulation of hierarchical power relations, and to respond to 'the need for a non-Eurocentric paradigm and a recovery and enhancement of the epistemological diversity of the world' (Borrelli et al., 2019: 17).

Old battles, new ontologies, epistemological absences

In this historical moment, grand narratives of progress and universals of liberation have yielded to postmodernist and post-structural approaches that question tales of future equality, truths of victory of the oppressed, and fixed subjectivities (St Pierre, 2013). Here, to historicise and contextualise my analytical approach to disability and de-colonialism, I merge three bodies of analytical knowledge: (i) Foucault's post-structural methods and the making of subjects through both relations of power/knowledge and ethical work as care of the self; (ii) post-structural CDS and the studies of ableism in higher education; (iii) Epistemologies of the South and the sociology of absences and emergences. These three analytical approaches help me decentre the disabled subject and open up new possibilities of being and doing subjective diversity in academic contexts, as well as critically decolonise and de-able epistemologies in Global North universities.

   Foucault (1984a [1971]) defines his post-structural perspective as a 'history of the present', whereby he describes 'the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects' (1982: 777). He intends power to be understood as material, productive and relational and, by intersecting with scientific knowledges, it directs subjects' conduct, opening certain subjective positions which individuals are summoned to take. These scientific knowledges constitute posited truths that provide languages, epistemic frameworks and regimes of practices that mould, and simultaneously limit, subjects' processes of self-formation and self-intelligibility. Foucault (1982: 777–8) calls them 'dividing practices', whereby 'the subject is divided inside himself (sic.) or divided from others' and, through the act of being categorised, 'human beings are given both a social and personal identity [through] combining the mediation of a science and the practice of exclusion' (Rabinow, 1984: 8). These human and social sciences are deployed to normalise individuals' behaviour according to specific state and institutional objectives of (neoliberal) productivity and order.

   However, Foucault resorted to a conception of subjective freedom that accorded some agency to subjects, as, to become productive, they *actively* take these subjective positions. Yet, as truth can never be divided from the time and context of production of these knowledges, on the one hand, pervading discourses of inclusion and economic

productivity contribute to shaping certain subjective possibilities at university (Peruzzo, 2020). On the other hand, given that at present human sciences (including Disability Studies) both retain a strong focus on the Global North (Grech, 2015; see also Connell, 2011; Meekosha, 2011) and are produced in unquestionably Eurocentric universities (Restrepo, 2018), the current conditions exclude, and produce as non-existent all those subjective positions that could be opened up through the encounter with Global South knowledges and practices.

The multiple limits imposed by epistemologies and ontologies of the Global North on disability and the university produce what Santos (2004) describes as the tension between 'social emancipation' and 'social regulation'. On the one hand, disabled people are emancipated by the increased opportunities for access and participation in higher education. On the other hand, regulation, or discipline as Foucault would call it, implies them *accepting* to be regulated as medicalised subjects 'on the basis of their alleged biological deficiencies' (Liasidou, 2014: 121) in order to be able to be university student (i.e. through the submission of a medical certificate to access university support and provisions), thus adjusting to the norms, and rhythms, of capitalism. This deficit understanding of disability and disabled subjects as having to be adjusted to a given and unquestioned performative norm has been described in CDS as ableist (Dolmage, 2017). Chouinard defines ableism as 'ideas, practices, institutions and social relations that presume able-bodiedness, and by so doing, construct persons with disabilities as marginalised . . . and largely invisible "others"' (Chouinard, 1997, in Campbell, 2009: 5). Despite pervasive discourses of equity of opportunities, ableism, and the acceleration of time that performativity engenders, continue to marginalise certain modalities of being in neoliberal academia which, through capitalist rationales, produces as 'non-existent', and 'radically exclude[s]', whatever 'lies beyond the realm of what the accepted conception of inclusion considers to be its other' (Santos, 2007: 2).

Santos (2004: 184) defines this production of subjective and epistemic non-existence as a 'waste of experiences', which casts bodies and minds that do not conform to a certain norm as needing to be rehabilitated and corrected, and relegates the colonial to 'the state of nature where civil society's intuitions have no place' (Santos, 2007: 7). Here the reference to Victor's story becomes evident – the feral child of Aveyron studied by teachers and doctors and categorised as 'developmentally delayed' after having spent his childhood in the forest (Canevaro and Goussot, 2000), the uncivilised Other, the 'primitive' (Quijano, 2000) from the wild urban forest, integrated into the Westernised enlightened society and disciplined according to the principles of an emerging special pedagogy. This logic, Darian-Smith (2016: 177) continues, 'has posited civilised, lawful, productive Europeans against uncivilised, lawless, lazy "savages" for centuries . . . [maintaining] practices of neo-colonialism into the 21st century', and reproducing ableist understanding of bodies, productivity, and citizenry. Here Victor becomes a cross-reference to a common struggle 'from the borders' that Mignolo and Tlostanova (2006: 218) neatly argue challenges the very idea of modernity (and postmodernity) by calling for 'alternatives *TO* modernity', and debunks the unquestioned and naturalised idea that 'the past five hundred years of European history are the point of arrival of the human race'. Victor also materialises the two narratives of modernity that animated the function of universities: the necessity of educating the largest number of people (therefore fuelling discourses of

inclusion and social mobility), 'so as to instruct subjects towards learning useful knowledge'; and the narrative of universities as institutions that grant the moral progress of populations, 'through the formation of moral leaders' (Castro-Gómez, 2007: 80–1).

Following Mignolo and Tlostanova, Santos (2004: 158) connects to Foucault's (1984a [1971]) understanding of history as the 'history of the present', affirming that 'the understanding of the world and ways it creates and legitimises social power has a lot to do with conceptions of time and temporality', which in Western (liberal) rationality 'on the one hand, contracts the present and, on the other, expands the future'. Santos proposes 'a sociology of absences' to expand the present, and a 'sociology of emergences' to contract the future. The sociology of absences 'consists of an inquiry that aims to explain that what does not exist is in fact actively produced as non-existent, that is as a non-credible alternative to what exists' (Santos, 2004: 169), attempting to retrieve all those subjective experiences that have been precluded by the hegemonic and exclusionary work of Westernised scientific knowledges. Santos identifies five modes of production of non-existence: (i) monoculture of knowledge (Eurocentric Disability Studies and scientific knowledges), (ii) linear time (and velocity of production), (iii) logic of classification (dividing practices); (iv) logic of dominant scale (the universal and the global overriding the local and the contextual); and (v) the logic of productivity (capitalist performativity). To these modalities, he counterposes corresponding 'ecologies of knowledges', which mix Western and non-Western components, and therefore open up to 'virtually infinite' subjective experiences. On the other hand, the sociology of emergences aims to 'contract the future', by challenging narrations of progress and emancipation, and substituting their 'emptiness' with 'a future of plural and concrete possibilities, utopian and realist at one time, constructed in the present by means of activities of care' (Santos, 2004: 180). By retrieving chance and uncertainty as crucial constituents of subjective formation, the idea of determination is replaced with the idea of care, contracting the future by means of real possibilities and capacities.

The presentness of knowledge and the practices of care to overcome binomial divisions and narratives of progress in the Epistemologies of the South are deeply connected with Foucault's (2000) last studies on ethics and care of the self. Foucault refers to ethics as 'an attitude or a way of life' (Oksala, 2005: 160), a work of reflection and transformation that entails a different idea of freedom, more connected to how subjects constitute themselves, and relate to others, through strategies and practices of care. This process of self-formation and care is detached from legal pronouncements and scientific classifications. As Foucault (1984b: 349–50) points out

> My idea is that it's not necessary to relate ethical problems to scientific knowledge. Among the cultural inventions of mankind, there is a treasury of devices, techniques, ideas . . . that [can] constitute a certain point of view which can be useful as a tool to analysing what is going on now and to change it.

Modern science in the Global North, according to Santos (2007: 159), has 'the monopoly of the universal distinction between true and false' and it dismisses 'beliefs, opinions, intuitive or subjective understandings' as valid constituents of epistemic traditions and ethical practices for subjective formation. Medicine, with its dividing practices and

binomial classifications, has hidden the treasure of strategies and experiments coming from the disabled community that deserve validity and that can be used to begin to challenge the capitalistic conformation of present universities. These strategies also overcome the binary division able/disabled, and to some extent South and North (Castro-Gómez, 2002), and draw upon an ecology of knowledges that open up students' ontological dimension, transcending narrowly defined subjectivities and experimenting with self-creation as university subjects. These tools are also pedagogical and learning strategies that can enhance and facilitate the 'work of translation' (Santos, 2004) within universities, and therefore operate as bridges 'towards a transcultural dialogue of knowledges' (Castro-Gómez, 2007: 80). Hence, by bringing together intersecting analytical understandings from post-structural CDS, Foucault's notion of the subject and ethical work of care, and Epistemologies of the South in the following sections I resort to disabled students' accounts as ways of being and doing that are made unthinkable in the university, discarded as not valid because they challenge the current capitalist ideas of productivity, inclusion and what is the legitimate subject of university.

The research study

Data used in this article are part of a qualitative study which merged Foucault's archaeological, genealogical and governmentality methods with ethnographic tools, conducted in a university in northern Italy in 2015–16 that performed very well, compared to other Italian universities, on international and national rankings. Here, I focus on the accounts of seven undergraduate and postgraduate disabled students (and one assistant to disabled students), all aware of the possibilities that university can offer to them, as well as its present epistemic limits which construct them as medicalised subjects of deficit. I draw upon data from semi-structured interviews with students in which questions aimed to elicit their university experience as disabled students, retrieving situations in which they felt the institution discriminated against them. In an earlier article, I presented the 'Model of Becoming Aware' (Peruzzo, 2020) to explore the workings of (Westernised) power relations and knowledges in opening such deficit positions at university. I showed how a neoliberal reason constructs disabled students as autonomous and successfully productive university subjects on the condition that they *accept* the medicalised (ontological) limits that the Western episteme imposes on their bodies. However, I added that these disabled students are also the ones who, by *being present* and seeing the ways in which the present university limits and disciplines their subjective conduct, can envisage modalities of doing things differently. In the following section, I analyse their accounts to open up new possibilities for non-hegemonic epistemologies and ontologies of diversity in higher education.

Ecologies of knowledges and disabled students' strategies: new epistemologies for ontologies of becoming

Non-scientific knowledge and processes of becoming

Currently, in order to perform as non-disabled students, disabled students at Italian universities are granted additional provisions and adjustments upon submission of a medical

certificate, which pathologises their condition and constructs them as deficit subjects. Through the epistemic dichotomies able/healthy, disabled/unhealthy this practice limits their possibilities of thinking of themselves, and of becoming, other. This ontological limitation emerges from the accounts of two dyslexic and dyspraxic students, a second-year undergraduate in sociology and a first-year postgraduate in psychology.

> One day I went to a meeting with the disability delegate and he said to me: 'Don't worry miss, we will cure you of this disease.' This disease?? We will cure it? (Int.2, May 2016)

> Then I asked the professor to take the exam orally, and she replied: 'Miss, in your life you must not look for alternative ways!'

> What??? I felt so discouraged, how can you say that to me just because I'm dyslexic! (Int.3, June 2016)

The first student rejects the definition of dyslexia as an illness to be cured and the subjective reductionism operated by an institution that prevents her from making the most of her university experience. Moreover, the medicalising reason underpinning the considerations of an institutional figure responsible for the effectiveness of access and success of disabled students at university shifts the responsibility for university's inaccessibility and discriminatory categorisation onto the disabled student, and shows the workings of ableism through the suggestion of a possible cure and pitiful reassurance.

The second quote illustrates how disabled students' subjectivities are not only limited by the medicalisation of their experience, but also by the compulsory adaptation to normalising and ableist forms of assessment. In this instance, the student is aware that she underperforms in a written exam, which is why she asks for an oral examination. Not looking for alternatives, but aware of her own capabilities and limitations constructed by a standardised system of assessment, the student rejects a system of support that assigns her extra time based on a scientific categorisation that puts her in a 'disabled box'. A monoculture and medicalising scientific knowledge here narrows diversity and alternative ontologies through pathologising difference from an unquestioned norm (Liasidou, 2014).

On the other hand, an ecology of knowledges recognises the 'existence of a plurality of knowledges beyond scientific knowledge' (Santos, 2004: 183). The account of a blind student in his second year of Master's in Engineering of Tele-communications restores hope beyond scientific and Eurocentric dualism.

> My attitude as you've noticed today, is of challenge, of mockery of myself, that is, I pretend to use the university concierge to go to the bathroom because I like teasing people, making sure that they ask themselves some questions, for example about the difference between what you say and what you think, a difference to which I am not exempt but which probably, with my character and way of doing, I want to remark. (Int.1, May 2016)

Here the disabled student, with simplicity, irony and courage, shows how diversity can unfold in the moment, meaning to reinvent yourself through a difference that does not imply posited scientific knowledge to become true, but that fluidly becomes through marvel and irony. The ecology of knowledges is not knowledge of 'become' but of

'becoming' (St Pierre, 2013), it enables porous experiences through a process of self-critique, and stimulates reflections in others by 'throw[ing] off familiar ways of thought and looking at the same things in a different way' (Kritzman, 1988: 321). This student shows how his 'degree of spontaneity based on the refusal to deduce the potential from the actual' is the enactment of processes of becoming whatever he wants, without being dictated to by medicalising epistemologies. He effectively demonstrates how 'constituted powers can cease to be a destiny and [can be] realistically confronted with constituting powers' (Santos, 2007: 40). In this way, 'like postcolonial scholarship', Sherry (2010) points out, 'CDS research might have the potential of addressing these "them" and "us" master narratives, and hence challenging the disabling relationships, and any forms of discrimination or oppression' (in Chataika, 2012: 259). This binary narrative, based on dividing practices of scientific knowledges, can be rewritten through a diversity of attitudes, practices, beliefs, which can inform and reshape what counts as knowledge and the assessment criteria used to make it valid (Castro-Gómez, 2002; Santos, 2007). Marvel and irony are not considered valid components of learning and assessment in today's market-driven university. However, the 'sharpened sense of reality' (Kritzman, 1988: 321) that this student demonstrates can become the base on which to develop 'a new capacity for wonder and indignation, capable of grounding a new non-conformist, destabilizing, and indeed rebellious theory and practice' (Santos 2007: 40). Through valorising non-scientific and non-rational knowledges (Quijano, 2000), here cross-fertilisation of epistemologies and transculturalisation (Castro-Gómez, 2007) enable disabled students' strategies to represent and mobilise alternatives in a university that constructs difference through medicalising, economic and ableist terms.

Pedagogies of the present and crip time

There is also a quest of time. Time and time management are also integral constituents of ableist and exclusionary university student experiences. As Santos (2004: 189) aptly puts it, both subaltern experiences in the Global South and disabled students 'have been forced to respond both to the shortest duration of immediate needs of survival and to the long duration of capitalism and colonialism'. Rather than questioning normalising and standardised pedagogy and assessment, disabled students are given additional time to complete their exams, which most of the times translates into long assessment sessions. Here a physics student is being very critical of this practice.

> you cannot assess a student on something you do in three hours, you should give projects whereby people reflect and work and not projects that are prescriptive . . . because otherwise you take away their added value. (Int.5, July 2016)

Having been given three hours to answer theoretical questions, which he struggles both to complete as a dyscalculic and dyslexic student, and to focus on, due to dyspraxia, this student's experience is an example of how disabled students are routinely ground down by the demands of academia. The conception of time here is what Kafer (2013: 28) defines as a 'curative time and imaginary', which deals with 'an understanding of disability that not only expects and assumes intervention but also cannot imagine or

comprehend anything other than intervention'. These requests of accelerated capitalist production of knowledge expose compulsory able-bodiedness and able-mindedness (McRuer, 2006) as constitutive of the legitimate subject of the present neoliberal university. A longer project – the solution that the student suggests – represents an experiential form of learning in which slowness to think and reflect replaces the standardisation and acceleration of outcome production. This understanding of time has been conceptualised in CDS as crip time, which 'challenges the disabling pace of life . . . the normative and normalizing expectations of pace and scheduling' (Abes and Wallace, 2020: 577), by making them more flexible in relation to a diversity of bodies and minds (Price, 2011).

Crip time is also concerned with slowness, with making time and space for productive reflection, so as to both enable a pedagogy of the present and care, and allow for 'imagining futures and futurity otherwise' (Kafer, 2013, 27). A visually impaired student of law reflects on this.

> Because there's not only suffering, there's also taking care of oneself, and having the right to do it above all. In the end, we must always think that we only live once, that we must try to live as fully as possible, that it doesn't mean continuing to do things, but that you must think about the present, and not that you mustn't think about the future but that you must enjoy everything, reflect on everything, it's something that I have set for myself, it's my goal and it's changed me for the better. (Int.4, June 2016)

Here the student reflects on the present 'from the perspective of its finitude' (Mbembe, 2016: 42) and, while expanding the present moment, she is also contracting the emptiness of a liberal, Westernised future (Santos, 2004). However, she has not given up on planning for the future, but embedded it squarely into ethical work on her self as a 'concern for existence' (Burchell, 1996) and a practice of crip self-care (Sheppard, 2020: 39). She ethically rewrites and dissolves that dualistic partition of body and mind (Castro-Gómez, 2007; Connell, 2011), opening up for infinite subjectivities through pedagogies of the present by caring for her body and self as a project in the present *for* the future.

These are processes that ask for an expansion of the present so as to allow a sociology of emergences (Santos, 2004) to question the colonial, ableist premises which see knowledge as constant accumulation, and which interpret difference as 'an unjustifiable and outrageous "delay"' and the South as 'a stubborn and resolute "latecomer"' (Borrelli et al., 2019: 30). Ethical work requires being present and asks for slow-paced practices that go against the grain of neoliberal capitalism and interrupt the progressive narration of time that dictates the Eurocentric modern project (Lander, 2000).

Kinship and learning through sensitivity

The competitive pushes constitutive of neoliberalism have promoted individualised forms of support for disabled students to equalise their opportunities and foster their independence. In the next quotation, a first-year visually impaired student of International Relations discusses an example of the failure of this form of support during the university admission exam.

> I have a friend, visually impaired like me, who had taken the admission test for languages. On the day of the exam, the university didn't print the test in a bigger font for him and they paid a person to read the test to him in English . . . but [this person] had a particular accent . . . because they usually choose someone not competent in the subject to avoid cheating. . .. And it's completely different to listen to a person than to see it written.. . . He failed the test and wasn't admitted and was mortified and I don't know how it ended, I just know that he's now taking the postgraduate diploma to become a cook. (Int.6, August 2016)

The student here illustrates how the allegedly inclusive Global North university leaves out the 'discardable populations . . . scarifying democracy to promote capitalism' (Santos, 2007: 19–20). This university, while letting perish those students who are not sufficiently independent, also transforms interpersonal relations into services (Lazzarato, 2009), compromising community relations and kinship that can promote learning without transforming support into paid service.

However, in another excerpt, a disabled student assistant (a student who supports disabled students in their everyday university tasks) describes the intangible but very material feeling of understanding and empathising with difference, learning from a disabled student he supported:

> I'd say it was a day-to-day adjustment of my habits . . . for example, I always felt like opening the door and letting [the student] go first, nobody's told me to do so, and instead [the student] told me: 'Look, it's a feeling that I don't like, you go first.' And since that day I have always gone first, but like so many other things, it's up to you to have a little sensitivity and to learn day by day . . . we nurtured a beautiful friendship. Now it seems trivial to say, but it was a lot for me.. . . For me it was special because I had to redo a course and I struggled but as [the blind student] knew how to use the computer very well, he explained to me many things I didn't know, it was a growing experience not only from a human viewpoint but also from a didactic one, [the blind student] was really a shoulder to me. (Int.7, August 2016)

The assistant weaves friendship, sensitivity and reciprocal support in an ever-growing intersection of knowledges, both scientific and non-scientific. Learning here does not entail passing an examination, it rather implies reflecting and building on respect and sensitivity as constitutive parts of the university path. 'New forms of CDS scholarship', Goodley et al. (2019: 8–9) remark, 'are advancing new social theories of disability that respond to . . . community and kinship networks.'

This student's experience compels a move away from the marketisation of support proper to neoliberal, Western understanding of inclusive practices. The de-parochialisation of the Eurocentric university (Restrepo, 2018) here would imply rethinking equalities of opportunities and inclusion as just matters of access and participation within the university's walls, in particular of students from highly racialised and ableist social categories, to the extent to which they perform productively. 'The Zimbabwean Shona concept of "kubatana" (oneness)', Chataika (2012: 261) suggests, 'places inclusiveness at the core of humanness'. Inclusion, sensitivity and learning can be woven together, and weave together communities and universities, in such a way that the centredness of the disabled (assisted) and the non-disabled (assistant) subject positions can dissolve in the fluidity of subjectivities that cross-fertilised learning through kinship and community can foster.

Situatedness, resistance and transcalar cooperation for global justice

Mobilised by a logic of dominant scale, the globalising effect of a norm based on Eurocentric epistemic knowledges (Lander, 2000) as sole generators of legitimate experience, have made local, and therefore irrelevant or non-existent, disabled students' experiences. Foucault (1982: 780), to counter-attack hegemonic knowledges and practices, suggests 'taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point'. Here a first-year postgraduate dyslexic student in psychology pushes for joining forces against them.

> I think that if the change doesn't start with us students, it won't happen. I believe that if we don't mobilise things, they'd remain as they are. So I think it's necessary to mobilise, insist on materials, insist on exams, always insist. Being a bit combative, believing in the change that must come from us, because if we don't believe in it, who are the ones that need it, who should believe in it? (Int.3, June 2016)

The student calls for 'believing in change' and for organised mobilisation against the university's logics of dominant scale and productivity that produce disabled students' experiences as non-existent. By denouncing discrimination, she advocates against a university that answers to global requirements – competitiveness and visibility in rankings – before the needs of students. To produce these experiences as valid, and to inform the necessary change, Borrelli et al. (2019: 18) call for universities to abandon 'any universalistic, disembodied paradigm' and embrace an 'explicitly context embedded "situated" model' which would include this student's beliefs in an ecology of knowledge as forms of caring for a silenced community.

For this reason, Meekosha (2011: 678) is right, 'disability must be contextualised in geopolitical terms' because these are 'immediate struggles' (Foucault, 1982) against the mundane and localised micro-physics of power exerted upon students' bodies. However, the global interdependence of universities, whereby neocolonial and ableist processes are mobilised on a world level, makes compelling and necessary to understand the damage that universities have caused globally, to develop a transcalar counter-resistance to posited epistemologies and silenced experiences. Santos's (2018) invitation is to open and nurture local–global linkages, thereby 'moving ideas' (Mbembe, 2016: 41) which originated from and are responsive to local and national contexts, but with 'a pan-national application' (Goodley et al., 2019: 8). A first-year student of Law with impaired mobility frames this practically.

> Since I was a child I've never liked discriminations, whether they were of religion, ethnicity, I didn't understand why everyone couldn't have the same opportunities. I was interested in this aspect even if it may seem more social than legal, but the fact of having a job that can give everyone the same means to be able to do what they want, this has always inspired me. I'd like to work at the level of humanitarian rights rather than notary or administrative work and the thought of giving everyone the same opportunities has always pushed me to take this path . . . to do something that can be useful for me but also for other people. (Int.8, September 2016)

The student connects the dots by hoping for a university that can give her the tools and the possibilities to become a subject who cares for and contributes towards more socially just societies, regardless of religion, ethnicity, race or abilities. She connects her personal and local experience with injustices happening on a global level. The ecology of knowledges is a counter-epistemology that weaves together 'peoples and worldviews on the other side of the line as partners of the global resistance to capitalism' that Santos (2004: 186) reclaims, aiming to provide 'epistemological consistency for pluralistic, propositive thinking'. By taking on the call of Meekosha (2011) to join struggles against the inequities of capitalism, and drawing on cross-fertilisation of knowledges, ethical practices of care for the others can be expanded through these struggles (Foucault, 2000). Efforts of distant communities can be unified (Santos, 2018), so as to mobilise an ecology of knowledges to rethink the narrow, hierarchised, racialised and ableist subjective positions opened by a capitalistic neoliberal reason in the present university.

Conclusions

In this article, I merge post-structural approaches in CDS and Decolonial Studies, in particular Epistemologies of the South, to begin to rethink the system of discrimination and ontological erasures experienced in the present Global North university, as a consequence of hegemonic capitalist Western epistemologies (Castro-Gómez, 2002). By drawing upon disabled students' strategies and beliefs, I show how their struggles can open up a transformative process of the present neoliberal university, questioning its ableist, neocolonial premises, and cripping its notion of linear time and progress (Kafer, 2013). Trying to move away from the typical roles of 'the Global North as a "giver" and the Global South as a "receiver"' (Chataika, 2012: 262), I suggest how Epistemologies of the South can enable and fertilise new epistemologies of the North. This effort both displaces European and Global North universities 'as the centre of the historical, epistemic, and political imagination' (Restrepo, 2018, 21), and opens the field of visibility of modern sciences towards 'prohibited domains, such as emotions, common sense, ancestral knowledges and embodiment' (Castro-Gómez, 2007: 90). This is an attempt to go beyond geographical dualisms (Santos, 2018) and create a dialogue, or rather, as Spivak (2016) puts it, 'confuse the distinctions . . . that make the division between North and South ignore the South in the North'. Here disabled students' experiences and indigenous knowledge encounter and enable new students' subjective ontologies that eschew geographical divisions and materialise the porosity of a North–South dualism. Answering to a call for epistemological action, and attempting 'to dismantle the hegemonic universalism of the Global Northern dominant model of the university' (Borrelli et al. 2019: 18), this article mobilises CDS and Decolonial Studies to rethink universities as places for epistemological diversity and subjective freedom. As Goodley et al. (2019: 8) remark:

> Such work is fundamental[,] permitting us to contest the normative and universalising theories of human and societal development of dominant social sciences (particularly those written from the Global North) and, instead, working with our international colleagues to produce decolonising frameworks of understanding akin to those found in Global South spaces.

I would like to conclude by drawing on disabled students' strategies to open for rethinking Global North universities beginning with:

- *Embracing 'intercultural translation'* (Santos, 2004) *for ontological diversity*. This is an attack on the Global North universities as centres of knowledge production, calling for 'a horizontal strategy of openness to dialogue among different epistemic traditions' (Mbembe, 2016: 37) and enabling disabled students to become through 'other alternative relations that have been obscured by hegemonic dichotomies' (Santos, 2004: 168).
- *Making the university present in its locality and globality*. Presentness in the local, and commitment to the global, is 'about radical sharing and universal inclusion' (Mbembe, 2016: 44). Universities, by rejecting the rules of neoliberal competition, can promote 'creativity and diversity based on cross-fertilization, [local] collaboration, and [global] cooperation' (Borrelli et al., 2019: 36).
- *Giving epistemological validity to community practices*. Sensitivity, 'interdependence and distributed forms of activism – marks of the potency of disability' communities are valid and caring knowledges that 'work through local and global connections' (Goodley et al., 2019: 8). Collective epistemologies embroil bodies in social dynamics, and social dynamics in bodies (Connell, 2019), and should be considered invaluable knowledges to meaningfully connect civic society and university (Castro-Gómez, 2007).

I hope this article will contribute to cross-fertilisation (Connell, 2019) between epistemologies. By calling for a university that builds on experiences where, geopolitically, 'other non-scientific and non-Western forms of knowledge prevail in everyday practices' (Santos, 2007: 30), it promotes subjective freedom as work of care of the self, that is caring for the others and for our future, which is intrinsically part of our present.

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