

This paper has been accepted for publication in *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, and the final (edited, revised and typeset) version of this paper will be published in *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Volume 118, by Duke University Press, All rights reserved. © Duke University Press

A Theory of Micro-activist Affordances:

Disability, Improvisation and Disorienting Affordances

In site-specific performance...[e]xtended conditions of *surface*, *climate* and *architectural enclosure* may actually occasion dynamic engagements from the performers, beyond the routine demands of functionality. Operating conditions may oscillate between *optimal*, *acceptable* and *unacceptable*.... But the very engagement itself may form the substance of performance: ergonomics as performance. In the dynamic interplay of body and environment, both strategically planned and tactically improvised, performers encounter – and counter – the immediate effects of site. Audience witness the impact of real phenomena, albeit in a work of invention (Pearson 2010: 171–2).¹

What happens when we encounter an environment that does not conveniently provide “things to ‘do things’ with” (Ahmed 2006: 88)? What happens when we cannot easily extend ourselves into the world, and find external counterparts for our interior states, needs, and pains, and for the particular shapes, sizes, and abilities of our bodies? What happens when the environment, with its solid surfaces and substantiality, seems “wholly ignorant of the ‘hurtability’ of human beings,” “immune to” their vulnerabilities (Scarry 1985: 288) and hostile to their bodily singularities, and as such, becomes inherently disorienting? In this article, I unpack these questions through the development of a new theory of affordances informed by ideas of *performance*, *improvisation* and *making* on the one hand, and *embodiments of disability* on the other.

Artists, activists and scholars working at the intersections of performance and disability have demonstrated how performance can be a way to “de-naturalize disability” and unsettle certainties about it (Kuppers 2003: 69). They have shown how embodiments of disability can subvert ableist norms and practices both on and off stage (see Sandahl and Auslander 2005); and how crippling can be “both theatrical and everyday practices deployed to challenge oppressive norms” and form new communities (Sandahl 2003: 38). This article builds upon and expands this literature by bringing into focus a new co-mingling of disability and performance: *performance as a site of affordance-improvisation* and *disability micro-activism*.

To do so, I draw on a visual ethnography I conducted during 2009–2010 in Istanbul (Turkey), and Quebec (Canada), working with people with invisible disabilities related to rheumatoid arthritis (RA). During my fieldwork, I explored how these people go about their everyday lives – lives lived with chronic pain, loss in joint motion, movement restrictions, and the fluctuations of a disease that make it impossible to know which joint will be affected, when, and to what degree. While I am aware that notions such as loss, restriction, and contraction have negative connotations in a field that has long worked to decouple disability from “lack” and “tragedy,” my use of these notions aligns with Alison Kafer’s project of “reckoning with loss, limitation, inability, and failure” (2013: 141), and seeks to foreground the generative potential to emerge from constraints. The theory of micro-activist affordances that I will propose is thus, in some ways, my response to Kafer’s yearning for “stories that

not only admit limitation, frustration, even failure, but that recognize such failure as ground for theory itself” (141).

In considering what I encountered in the field (as well as of my own experiences as a disabled person with RA), I argue that just as performers counter the constraining and enabling effects of site “in a work of invention” (Pearson 2010: 172), so too do disabled people *disorient* existing affordances of the world in a *work of invention*. Upon encountering an environment that does not welcome their corporeal particularities, upon finding that their pains and limited movements are not reciprocated by its insensitive surfaces, disabled people, as the rest of this article shall show, come up with creative workarounds, invent tools with existing materials, and author highly creative choreographies (for the “simplest” of daily tasks) that I call micro-activist affordances. By “micro-activist affordances,” I mean disabled people’s micro, ongoing, and (often times) ephemeral acts of world-building, with which they make the world offer affordances that are otherwise unimaginable. Micro-activist affordances, in the way I formulate it, transform disabled people’s everyday lives into pockets of site-specific performances. I introduce this new theory of affordances as a way to understand how disabled people literally *make up*, and at the same time *make up for* the affordances that the built social and material world fails to readily provide, in and through their impromptu performances.

While other scholars of disability have explored the ingenuity of disabled living, with apt concepts such as “crip technoscience” (Hamraie 2017) and “engineering at home” (Hendren and Lynch 2018), the theory of micro-activist affordances locates this creativity strictly within the temporality of performance, where affordances remain always in the making. Put differently, micro-activist affordances are ways of bringing what Friedner and Cohen call “inhabitable worlds” (2015) into life, albeit within the transience of performance and without a solid claim on what those worlds should be or look like. Situating affordance creation within the ephemerality of performance, as I shall explain later, constitutes the politics of the theory of micro-activist affordances with which I seek to trouble the certitudes about disability and activism, such as where they can be found, who can engage in activism, and by which means.

Troubling the categories of disability and activism

We may find “disability worlds” (Ginsburg and Rapp 2013), and the activisms that emerge from these worlds, in many different sites and temporalities but doing so requires us to ask, along with Kafer, “where do we, as disability studies scholars and activists, continue *not* to look?” (2013: 149). Thus, to focus on affordance creations emerging from experiences of chronic illness, pain and invisible disability – experiences that, despite an emergent body of literature, remain relatively uncharted in disability studies (see Kafer 2013: 12; Puar 2017: xix) – and to term this as *micro-activist* constitutes my intervention in the understanding of disability as an identity and political category, and the notions of activism and access defined through that category. To be clear, none of my interlocutors self-identified as disabled or crip². But, as I shall show, this was no impediment in imagining “inhabitable worlds” in and through creative affordances – affordances that often went unnoticed and offered no overt reason for disability pride or celebration. As I shall argue, disability activism can occur in these most transitory performances, by people who do not necessarily identify as crip (or

have an impairment to begin with), and may be pursued, not for the purpose of explicitly demanding access and public visibility, but for the purpose of silently awaiting “access intimacy” (Mingus 2011).

I begin with a brief introduction to the original theory of affordances developed by James Gibson. Taking this as my point of departure, I propose an ecological definition of disability as a *contraction* of the environment and its available affordances. I then turn to what this contraction may lead to, bringing in an ethnography of micro-activist affordances. Drawing on a performance lens, and Elaine Scarry’s (1985) descriptions of “making,” I discuss how my interlocutors’ creative affordances disorient the existing theory. Expanding the emergent literature on affordances and innovation (Bloomfield, Latham and Vurdubakis 2010; Dokumaci 2013; Rietveld and Kiverstein 2014), I end with a theory of micro-activist affordances within the zone where disability and performance co-mingle, and reflect on what such a theory could open up for critical disability scholarship.

Laying the ground for affordances

The theory of affordances was originally proposed by James Gibson (1979), a scholar of ecological psychology, and has since been taken up in a variety of fields. In this paper, I propose a new theory of affordances developed from a critical disability perspective – a standpoint that was neither part of Gibson’s original theorization of affordances (1979), nor has it been explored in full in the post-Gibsonian literature on affordances (see Dokumaci 2017: 394).

During the last ten years, I have worked with the theory of affordances, experimenting with and rethinking it in relation to various forms of physical and sensory disability as well as my own experiences as a disabled person. After a series of reformulations (Dokumaci 2013; Dokumaci 2017), I have come to realize that what I have been doing is not the rehabilitation of an existing theory (with a disability add-on), but the development of a new theory in its own right: a *critical disability theory of affordances*, that queers³ and disorients the very notion of affordances. I have explained Gibson’s ecological approach critically and at length elsewhere (Dokumaci 2017). Therefore, here I give only a brief summary before moving onto the tenets of my theorization.

Gibson’s (1979) conception of affordances emerges from his broader project of framing perception in ecological terms, which he bases on the idea of the *mutuality* of organism-environment relations. Defining perception ecologically, he argues that organisms can *directly* perceive their environment and its *surfaces and substances*, because self- and environment-perception are complementary processes. Meaning, we cannot perceive the world without co-perceiving ourselves at the same time (141). If we can perceive the environment *directly*, Gibson infers, then there is no reason why we should not also perceive what it *affords* to us. A round, stiff object that fits with the shape of my palm and the strength of my fingers, for instance, offers grasping and looks graspable. Affordances refer exactly to such possibilities of action, the actualization of which depends upon the reciprocity between the properties of the organism and those of the environment. When “a surface is horizontal, flat, extended, rigid, and knee-high relative to a perceiver,” that is, when its “properties are

seen relative to the body surfaces, the self, they constitute a seat and have a meaning” (128). When a surface is relatively rigid, round, and is smaller than the scale of my palm, it constitutes a graspable object and has a meaning. “What a thing is and what it means are not separate, the former being physical and the latter mental.... To perceive a surface is level and solid is also to perceive that it is walk-on-able” (Gibson 1982: 408) or, I would add, wheel-on-able or crawl-over-able.

It is important to note that not only objects but all sorts of tools, technologies, infrastructures, events, substances, and surfaces, as well as humans and organisms, can have affordances. The affordances of the environment are virtually limitless (Stoffregen 2003: 120), and some have, as Gibson emphasizes with his idea of the *niche*, “already been taken advantage of,” while others await to be occupied (1979: 128).

Defining disability ecologically

Gibson writes that affordance refers to “the mutuality of the organism and the environment in a way no existing term does” (Gibson 1979: 127). Disability, I would argue, refers to the *puncturing* of that mutuality. In locating disability in the context of affordances, I propose to define disability ecologically as the contraction of the environment and the inaccessibility, unavailability or negation of its existing set of affordances. This definition may, at first sight, appear to reaffirm the social model, i.e. people are disabled, not by their bodies, but by the barriers the environment poses. But to speak in ecological terms is exactly *not* to speak in terms of either/or, both/and: that disability is either in the body or the environment or in both. In defining disability ecologically, I suggest that we think of it through the reciprocity of organism-environment relations and how these can be ruptured and remade in new combinations. An ecological definition of disability, I contend, can give us a better understanding of *what it is* that encompasses the barriers of disabling public spaces, as well as highly embodied aspects of chronic pain and disease, and resource-deprived states inflicted by structural violence. After all, chronic pain and disease, as I will argue in the following, present access issues in their own right, it is just that the inaccessibility they entail is not the same as the one that we have been familiarized with through the discourses of civil rights and social models.

Chronic pain and disease as access issues

Unless faced with extreme deprivation, all of our somatic, psychic states and needs, Elaine Scarry writes, can be reciprocated by a world-counterpart (1985: 5). “Hearing and touch are of objects outside the boundaries of the body, as desire is desire of x, fear is fear of y, hunger is hunger for z; but pain is not ‘of’ or ‘for’ anything – it is itself alone” (161–2). If I were to put Scarry’s claim into the language of affordances: in the devouring of an apple, hunger is reciprocated by the affordance of the apple, but in the experiencing of physical pain there is nothing to reciprocate this unique bodily state. Pain is utter “objectlessness” (162). In fact, it is this objectlessness that makes (acute) pain essential to biological survival. In not taking any possible world-counterpart, pain allows us to realize the limits of what the environment affords for good. “[T]he object, place, substance, event, or animal that affords injury need not be encountered; it can be *avoided*, *escaped*, or *averted*” (Gibson 1982: 406). To put this differently, what the environment offers in the perception of acute pain is what

brings harm and injury, and the action possibility that is perceived is *avoidance*. In the case of chronic pain however, even that possibility, I contend, becomes impossible. Chronic pain entails “the disruption and constriction of one’s habitual world” in spatial, temporal and intentional terms (Leder 1991: 76). The environment does not provide any complementary relations to this bodily state, even in the form of an impending danger that one might be able to avert. What is perceived in the experiencing of chronic pain is not what the environment offers for good or ill, but the dearth of any such offering in that environment. Chronic pain is thus the utter absence and negation of affordances. To experience chronic pain, I argue, is to experience a diminishing of the environment, a narrowing down of its sphere of possible actions, a contraction of its opportunities and lessening of its affordances.

Chronic pain’s neighboring state, chronic disease, can be viewed along the same lines. Health, Canguilhem argues, “is a margin of tolerance for the inconstancies of the environment” (1989, 197). In good health, a person is not only in harmony with the habitual norm of life but is also capable of “tolerating [its] infractions” and “instituting new norms in new situations” (197). This means that when circumstances change, like when a virus spreads or a heatwave hits or a habitual bus stop is closed, a person in good health can respond to those changes without much deliberation: by firing up an immune reaction, increasing liquid intake, going to the next bus stop. Disease, on the other hand, is “a reduction” in that “margin of tolerance” (199). A person in ill health does not have a plenitude of *opportunities* at her disposal with which to respond to the vagaries of the environment with ease. An already compromised immune system has reduced biological resources to deal with an invading virus. A person with chronic kidney disease cannot *just* drink more. One with osteoarthritic knees calculates every step needed to reach the next bus stop. Even for the simplest of daily tasks, one might need, to quote lupus advocate Christine Miserandino, to “make a plan like [one is]... strategizing a war” (2003). As Leder reflects on a depiction by Herbert Plügge of the “reduced sense of time and space” experienced by cardiac patients, chronic disease, like chronic pain, can be experienced as the constraining of *the space for action*:

A landscape is viewed not as a field of possibility but of difficulties to negotiate. The ordinary sense of free and spontaneous movement is now replaced by calculated effort: one does not want to take chances. Etymologically, “ease” comes from the French word *aise*, originally meaning “elbow room” or “opportunity”. This experience of world-as-opportunity is precisely what dis-ease calls into question⁴ (Leder 1991: 81).

Drawing from this etymology of the word dis-ease, I argue that chronic disease entails a shrinking down of the environment and its available affordances. Chronic disease and pain, in this ecological definition, are as much access issues as they are barriers: they are about the *non*-availability of affordances or not having them within easy reach.

What might an ecological definition of disability open up?

While disability studies has come a long way since the inception of social models and rights-based approaches, chronic disease and pain continue to hold an ambiguous place in the field, as signified by the rather cumbersome use of “ands” and “ors,” as in “disability and/or

chronic illness”. But once we define disability as a narrowing down of the environment and the availability of its affordances, we have a common vocabulary to understand what it is that is shared between the experience of a person in a wheelchair facing a flight of stairs, a person crawling under bedsheets in excruciating physical pain, or another sizzling in mental pain during a breakdown.

Further, locating disability within the context of affordances allows us to go beyond “a possession model...[of] having abilities or not” and to think of disability more fluidly, “through action,” as Friedner and Cohen suggest (2015). Approaching disability ecologically we can, in fact, develop a better understanding of how lives experiencing a contraction of the environment and its affordances (without the necessary involvement of an impairment) fall into the zone of disability. Thus, we see it in war and torture, where pain is inflicted to “unmake” the world and its offerings (Scarry 1985); in racism and colonialism, where populations are deprived of resources for survival (Erevelles 2011); in the sustained “production of impairment in the global South” where colonialism and global capitalism exploit labor, land and economic resources (Meekosha 2011: 668); and in the slow debilitation of the infrastructures needed to sustain daily life within what Puar calls a biopolitics of “maiming” (2017: 136). For sure, where, how and under which conditions that shrinking occurs matters; because each occurrence of disability is site-specific, and as such requires a discussion of specificities rather than “a tendency to talk of universals” (Meekosha 2011: 670). Nevertheless, disability, in all of its variegated manifestations, occurs as the contraction of the environment and its affordances, regardless of the cause of the contraction. The question then is: what happens when the environment becomes less and less available for action?

Performance as space for anarchic improvisation

Recently, I attended *Let Me Play the Lion Too*, “an improvisational experiment,” in the words of the theatre company Told By an Idiot, in which twelve actors with and without disabilities work together to “devise new improvised evenings of *anarchic spontaneity*” (emphasis added).⁵ At the beginning of the performance, the director speaks directly to us, the audience, and describes the company’s working method that is based not on scripts, but on improvisation. It is when you put restrictions on their space for action, the director says, that the actors begin to improvise and become creative within those constraints. Then the play begins. The director first tells the performers what each act is about, giving them limits such as where they can act, and what language, expressions or body parts they can use. What follows is “anarchic spontaneity,” to quote the Company’s description, as actors bring creative possibilities of action into life, shaped by their own singularities – possibilities that would not have been imaginable in the absence of the constraints imposed upon them.

I have so far argued that disability can ecologically be defined as a shrinking of the environment and its affordances. Now I turn to my ethnography to see what happens in the face of such constraint.

Disabled living as site-specific performance

In the following, I present a series of affordance improvisations that my interlocutors shared with me during the visual ethnography I conducted in Istanbul and Quebec.⁶ All my participants knew that I lived with the “same” disease that they live with, and at the beginning

of our interviews, I told them that I was particularly interested in their daily survival techniques, among other things. This knowledge may have facilitated the way they shared their affordances with me, and perhaps made them more reflective on how and why they came up with them. As part of my method, I use the affordances of visual media to capture the key moments of their affordance creations in individual or series of still images. Whenever my interlocutors talk about a key moment in their affordances, this is indicated by still images so as to better capture the inventiveness of their affordances.

Affordance improvisation #1: Disorienting buttons, shirts and fabrics

Figure 1: A person dextrously pushes the small buttons of their shirt through the buttonhole, their fingers guided by the straight lines of their shirtfront. 'On Falling Ill', Arseli Dokumaci, *Performance Research: A journal of the Performing Arts*, reprinted by permission of Taylor & Francis Ltd, www.tandfonline.com

When we find readily available counterparts for our bodily attributes in the world of things and the places that surround us; when we follow the lines that are given to us, as in the shirtfront in the picture above (figure 1), we are “oriented” (Ahmed 2006). Orientations are about following straight lines, and at the same time making lines even straighter. But when one’s fingers are in pain and inflamed; when their shapes are re-formed by disease, there is no straight line to follow to put the button through its hole (see figure 2). The manipulation of a tiny button and buttonhole requires pain-free hands with fine motor skills. This is not something that my interlocutors necessarily have. But they pull the fabric around; they bend, twist and squeeze it, or wrap it around their fingers, and find some way of making the button pass through the hole without having to manipulate the button and the hole directly with their fingers. Through odd angles, bent positionings, and unlikely entanglements of the fabric, button and hands, without following straight lines, the affordances that lie beyond the coordinates of those straight lines are brought into being. These possibilities would not have been imaginable in the first place had fine motor skills not been restricted. Just as the performers of *Let Me Play the Lion Too* engage in acts of “anarchic spontaneity” within the space restricted by the director’s commands, so too do my interlocutors engage in impromptu affordances within the shrinkage of the environment experienced in disability,

and transform an action that is as micro and as mundane as buttoning a shirt into an act of “anarchic spontaneity.”

The affordances that my interlocutors come up with are not self-contained units of action. What one does with a shirt button may also relate to the sleeves or vice versa. Indeed, after we finish filming the buttoning, both Valerie and Ahmet, in two separate interviews, tell me that they often do not unbutton their shirt entirely but leave it partly buttoned (figures 3, 4).

Figure 2. Three sets of images show how the fabric of the shirt is looped and twisted as inflamed and painful fingers distort the shirtfront’s straight lines to push the button through the buttonhole.

Figure 3. In a series of four images, Valerie takes advantage of the larger size of her shirt: she pulls one arm out of the sleeve (with the help of her other arm) and slips the shirt off her body.

Valerie: Usually, I just take the top [meaning top button] and take it off. But then it's...

Arseli: You do it that way? [I mimic taking off a shirt like a pullover]

Valerie: Well, I took one arm at a...

Arseli: Like a shirt?

Valerie: Um, no. Yeah. Like this [see figure 3, still 1] if I can, like this [stills 2 and 3].... If I can, I would do it like that. This one is a big shirt so it would work. So, I wouldn't undo the whole thing. I would do like this [still 4] and pass over my head. So, I don't have to do them.

Figure 4. In two images, Ahmet pulls his shirt off over his head like a pullover, avoiding the need to unbutton it fully. 'On Falling III', Arseli Dokumaci, *Performance Research: A journal of the Performing Arts*, reprinted by permission of Taylor & Francis Ltd, www.tandfonline.com

Ahmet says, (translated from Turkish): I mean, I do for example, I do them [daily tasks] in a practical way. I undo two or three buttons and take it over as if it were a pullover," (see figure 4, still 1) smiling and pointing at his head, indicating that he looks for solutions. I ask if he could say a bit more about this. He says:

I wear the shirt as if it were a pullover [see figure 4, still 2]. I use it this way [smiling and winking at the camera] This, I do only to save time otherwise if I am free... I can do it.

I can do each button one by one. But practically speaking, why should I?... I mean I don't bother undoing it when I come back from work... As long as there is enough space to pull it over my head, as if it were a pullover.

Pointing to another benefit of taking off the shirt “as if it were a pullover,” he adds that this shortcut allows him to undo the buttons using both hands, facing the shirt instead of wearing it. “Because the other way around [meaning, when the shirt is already on you], only one hand can be at work. But this way, when you wear it as if it were a pullover, I can use my both hands, four or ten fingers at the same time.” (see Dokumaci 2013: 110).

With the affordance he creates, Ahmet disorients the materiality of a shirt, its buttons and sleeves. Like an actor on stage, he is very self-aware of what doing so affords him in terms of economizing his movements and time. Not only does Ahmet *counter* and *negate* what Aimi Hamraie would call “the normate template” (2017: 19), sewn into the very form of the garment, he explicitly articulates that micro-defiance, saying: “I can do each button one by one... But... why should I?” If I were to allude to the panpsychism attributed to the environment within affordances,⁷ a button might say, “Unbutton me.” But why should one follow that “demand,” fulfill that “request” or respond to that “encouragement” (Davis and Chouinard 2017: 2)? One may as well, as Ahmet does, leave the button as is, and transform the shirt into something it was not originally meant to be: a pullover.

Affordance improvisation #2: Disorienting caps and bottles

Similarly, the cap of a bottle might say, “Twist me off” – a subtle ableist order that underlies “twist-off” caps. But why should one follow that straight line? Instead one might, as Valerie does, hold the (tiny) cap in place and twist the (larger) bottle (see figure 5). Valerie’s micro-activist affordance was first spotted by her non-disabled friend who was with us at the time of filming. After observing the action, and after having opened the bottle in the more conventional way as she would herself, she said in surprise: “You twist the bottle, and I would twist the top!” Indeed, Valerie replaces the affordance of a twist-off cap with a twist-off bottle of the cap (figure 5).

Figure 5. In a series of two images, Valeries shows how, with her fingers unable to twist the small bottlecap, she holds the cap with one hand and, with the other, turns the wide body of the bottle to open it.

Nurhayat creates different micro-activist affordances to deal with the same situation. After she tells me how she uses different methods to open bottles and jars (figure 6), I ask (translated from Turkish):

Arseli: You find a way of doing things?

Nurhayat: I mean, I can find a way if I cannot open a previously opened jar. But I am doing well these days, so I can. Or I just take them downstairs, to the shop owners. For example, I cannot even put on and off the hose of the vacuum by myself. I take them down the house to the workers there.

Arseli: You ask them?

Nurhayat: Yes, I ask for their help.

Arseli: You mentioned that at times, you open Coke bottle caps with your teeth.

Nurhayat: Yes it happens. I open the water and Coke bottles with my teeth.

Arseli: You do?

Nurhayat: Yes, let's say if I don't the time to go down, then at home I twist them with my teeth.

Figure 6. Nurhayat trying to open the bottle in two different positions

I ask Marielle whether she is able to open bottles, and she immediately takes out an old pair of gloves from her kitchen drawer, and says, “So, I use *caoutchouc* [rubber],” and smiles. She adds [translated from French]:

It’s because my hand cannot close [trying at the same time to make her hand into a fist, and demonstrating that her fingers do not fully close]. I had hand surgery. Then, I often I... I... I quarrel with... [while trying to grip the bottle with all her force; see figure 6, still 1]. Then, I go like this [she fully holds the bottle with her left and starts turning it; still 2]. It [meaning the glove] enlarges [pointing at the cap made larger by the glove; still 3] and it grips [still 4]. It is easier to open with the glove.

As she finishes explaining her movements, her expression changes, as if to say, “I don’t know if it’s good, but this is my way.” Then she smiles.

Figure 7. In a series of four images, Marielle demonstrates how she enlarges the bottlecap with a rubber glove so she can grasp it with fingers that do not fully close.

Henri and I are in the kitchen, filming Henri as he undertakes a series of tasks such as opening a bottle (see figure 8). I ask him if it hurts when he does such things, or if his hands get stuck in certain positions. He answers: “Like I say, my mobility [as he says this, he tries

moving his wrist up and down; left and right, and the limited range of motion becomes apparent] – that is all I got, you know. So if I’m doing stuff, it’s coming from shoulders, coming from the elbow. My hands, there is very little mobility.” He tries opening the cap. First, he holds the cap from the top with one hand, and the side of the bottle with his other hand. He is able to open the cap in a single go. Upon hearing the hissing sound as the bottle opens, he says,

Figure 7. Henri smiles as shows how he braces the bottle between his palm and the nodules on his fingers and twists it open.

“Oh, I got it.” He keeps turning the bottle slowly, and points at the nodules on his fingers, smiles, and says: “It’s stuck right here [meaning between the nodule and his palm].” Chuckling, he says: “See all the nodules have a... they serve for that. Not pretty but it works.”

Affordance improvisation #3: Disorienting bathtubs, the ground and shoes

Henri goes on to share his other affordance creations with me, including a special technique he invented for making DIY insoles for his shoes:

Like I said, I used to have a lot of problems walking, with the bones wanting to come out of my feet so uhm being barefoot, was a, was a real pain. It was really bad. So I, I... at a certain point, I didn't like going and take my shower because your feet are directly on the ceramic in the bath. That was quite painful. So, I tried to find a trick for making it better for the shower. So I started by putting a bath towel in the bottom of the bath, so that worked out but there was a lot of drying up to do and stuff like that. So, I tried to find a better trick for the shower, and finally I did. Simple, very simple, give me second? I will get my [smiling as he says this, he goes to another room and brings back a pair of rubber flipflops]... So, this is my trick for the shower. I've simply bought a pair of sandals, cheap sandals, 2-3 dollar sandals, and I put them on and got used to those sandals. Afterwards there was no problems for me taking showers and standing in the bath. Uhm, of course, walking was a big problem also for me... uhm... because of my bones that are all crooked in the feet. So I thought to myself "If it, if those sandals work for the bath, maybe they can also work for my shoes." So, what I did is: I went to the store, I bought a pair of shoes that is one size bigger than what I usually put on and.... I took out the sandals that were in them and I made sure that the bottom of the shoe was flat. That was very important! So I took the sandals that I used for the bath and I drew my feet and I drew the sandals that was in the shoe, afterwards I cut the shape that I needed, and I simply put the sandal in my shoe! And it took some adjustments afterwards, you know, sometimes I had to take out at the bottom, uhm, some of the, the, some of the rubber just so that it feels good.

Figure 10. Henri holds up his DIY sole, showing its construction from cheap flipflops and black tape.

As a virtuoso affordance creator, Henri explains to me in great the detail how he makes his DIY insoles. But most importantly, he is well aware that the making process does not end with the "end" product but is coterminous with the use-process.

Figure 9. Henri holds up his flipflops whose softness protects the deformed bones of his feet from the painfully hard surface of the bathtub.

I guess from 1996 to uhm at least 2006, I used to modify the sandals that were in my shoe. So I would have to add on different kinds of materials, you know, to lift up places and to cut off some places [mimicking the act] just to try to get that sole to fit my feet. It was a lot of work. But having a sole made like this [see figure 10] is a lot less work, and once you got it, probably it's just that they are perfect... for me [smiling and shrugging his shoulders as he says this].

After witnessing Henri's ingenuity I tell him that I had thought that they were bought from a specialized store and modified along the way. He answers:

Actually, I bought some sandals from orthopedics... and I simply hated them. I didn't like them, they didn't work for me. So, so I had to figure out some other way to, to be able to walk properly. Uhm... As you can see this is pretty old, see where I draw the shape of my foot, of course I didn't cut the top. And unfortunately, I cut the bottom so I shouldn't have done that, so I just added a piece there [pointing at the black tape] so it fits perfectly in my shoe. And there you go, it's a miracle on ice.

What Henri's affordance creation tells is that "adapted" objects, and "specialized" tools (such as insoles and other devices) that are designed by others in the name of making the consumer's feet more comfortable do not necessarily fulfill their marketed promise. Rather, it is Henri's self-engineered insoles, made from two dollar flipflops, and which have been showered, walked and drawn upon; cut and patched on along the way; and which may not be as shiny and seamless as the ones purchased from orthotics, that provide the affordance of walking with less pain. As if he were an orthotist himself, Henri is very aware of both what certain substances (such as rubber, tape) afford for his feet, with their nodules and pain, and what his feet need in order to feel less pain.

Figure 8. Henri holds up his DIY insoles, pointing to show how wearing them for months has caused them to conform to the shape of his big toe, creating the spaces his feet need to feel less pain.

See the shape of my toe here [see figure 11] how thick it is here [pointing at the midpart of the sole and then at the toe part], this big toe of mine needs a lot of space and also the heel is uhm the bone is quite sticking out [making a fist to illustrate the bone] so see the hole from my heel also. And you see some of the holes here that are from my bones. This sandal fits perfectly in my shoe and now I'm walking much better [smiling]. That's the trick for my sandals!

Henri has been making his DIY insoles for the past three years, and he says that his practice has matured over time. So far he has engineered two insoles which are ready for use, and he is wearing a newly-bought pair of flipflops which, he adds, will be ready in a couple of months to be transformed into new insoles for his winter boots.

A theory of micro-activist affordances

If it is through the very constraints imposed on them that the performers of *Let Me Play the Lion Too* enter into acts of improvised “anarchic spontaneity,” as do my interlocutors. Tiny buttons and bottle caps do not recognize the loss of fine motor skills. But then my interlocutors bend, contort, stretch and release the fabric of their shirts, manipulating buttons and buttonholes without having to use only their fingers. Twist-off caps are hostile to painful fingers and damaged joints. But then Marielle puts an old pair of rubber gloves on top of the cap, Nurhayat bites the cap to twist it, Henri squeezes the cap between the nodules on his fingers – all affordances that allow them to open bottles without having to rely solely on the force of their fingers. The ceramic surface of a bathtub is utterly ignorant of the nodules under Henri’s feet. But he wears a pair of cheap flip flops while showering and the foamy texture lessens the pain of being in direct contact with the hard, unpliant and hostile surface of a bathtub that knows nothing of his pain. Not only does Henri take showers wearing his flipflops, he walks with them with for days and weeks so the surface takes the shape of his feet and their nodules, as if that surface were alive and “sentiently aware” (Scarry 1985: 289) of his feet’s pain.

In the first part of this article, I defined disability ecologically, as a shrinking down of the environment, and a disorientation to its existing affordances and their availability for action. Now, drawing on my interlocutors’ affordance creations, I claim that it is precisely because of how disability is experienced that a space for improvisation opens up to make the environment afford in ways than it currently does. This space opened up, I argue, is the space of *performance*, and the action possibilities to emerge from it are what I call micro-activist affordances. By performance I mean, following Taylor, what “moves between the AS IF and the IS, between pretend and new constructions of the “real.”” (2016: 6). Performance is where I locate what Elaine Scarry describes as the act of making, during which “counterfactual revisions” of an existing materiality is “made up” and “made real” (1985, 22, 313). My claim is that it is precisely from this improvisatory space of oscillating between the current order of things and the “as if” that “micro-activist affordances” of disabled people emerge, and make the very same materiality afford otherwise.

One may ask how buttoning a shirt differently is activist, as any action can be done in all sorts of different ways, to the degree that there is no single way of buttoning a shirt. Similarly, with regard to making one’s own tools, one might argue that humans, disabled or not, continuously make things to the extent that all of material culture is a register of that making. But to term these disorienting affordances micro-activist, and to locate their creation

within the inventive space of performance is crucial to the theory of affordances I develop. To explain why, I turn to Elaine Scarry's depiction of the act of making.

The “counterfactual wish” that things were otherwise

Pain and imagination, Scarry writes, are the “framing events” of the entire terrain of human sentience, and it is within their boundaries that “all other perceptual, somatic and emotional events occur” (1985: 165). Pain and imagination are framing events because, she states, they are “each other’s missing intentional counterpart” (169). Pain is an intensely felt bodily state that is characterized by utter “objectlessness.” Imagination, on the other hand, is wholly made up of objects, while devoid of any corresponding “experienceable sentience” that comes with an actual object (162). The two, according to Scarry, complement each other through the making of an artifact.

Pain, because of its utterly aversive nature, “cannot be felt without being wished unfelt” (290). A person standing in the cold, for instance, not only feels her skin being burnt by the cold air but also wishes it would not feel so. This “counterfactual wish (‘perceiving her own susceptibility to cold and wishing it gone’)” is the first point where imagination begins to transform pain (315). The person who wishes the pain away is prompted to look for ways of “making real” what she wishes for. Perhaps she finds some wool, thread, and needles and begins to manipulate them by moving her hands, arms, fingers, and positioning her body in particular ways, creating what Scarry calls “the dance of labour” (316). The dance becomes the embodiment of her counterfactual wish, and as the dance disappears in its ephemerality (as do all performances), it leaves its traces on the materials so much so that the resulting artifact, whether it is a coat or blanket, becomes the materialization of that counterfactual-wish-dance. The shape of the artifact, Scarry writes, is not the shape of the skin, “not even the shape of pain-perceived but the shape of perceived-pain-wished-gone” (290).

In this way, imagination complements pain. First, pain is wished away; then that “private wish” is transformed into the shareable realm of action through the dance of labor; then that dance distils into the shape of a coat or blanket, which alleviates the pain “far better than did the dance” (291). As pain is “brought into relation with the objectifying power of imagination,” what was once an utterly objectless and passively-suffered state is transformed into “a self-modifying and, when most successful, self-eliminating one” (164). Thus pain and imagination become the framing events of all intentional states. While in all other acts of making, a bodily state or sentience is projected to the world outside, the projections to emerge from pain and imagination are much more radical than any other because they entail “not simply an alteration in degree” – in the way vision is augmented by wearing glasses – but the replacement or elimination of the “original given... by something wholly other than itself” (285). As pain is “brought into relation with the objectifying power of imagination,” what was once a wholly unresponsive materiality is attributed with “awareness of aliveness.” What was once an utterly objectless and passively suffered state is transformed into “a self-modifying and, when most successful, self-eliminating one” (164)

through the making of a coat or a blanket, which, by way of its very shape, makes the following “compassionate speech” (289): “I too know you are vulnerable to cold and in pain, and here, let me take it away.”

For the exact reason that Scarry defines pain and imagination to be the boundary conditions of all intentional acts, I consider the affordances emerging from the experiencing of disability as micro-activist affordances⁸. Allow me to explain what I mean by this.

Even though Scarry is talking about physical pain, the very characteristic she ascribes to pain – the lack of a world-counterpart discussed near the beginning of this article – may be taken as a general condition of disability in my ecological definition. I claimed that disability occurs when the environment contracts and becomes affordance-less, no matter where that -less comes from – whether it is a barrier, an ableist habitus, or the experience of chronic pain, dis-ease or debilitation. But then, “any state that was permanently objectless would no doubt begin the process of invention” (162). This happens, as I have reiterated, as much in everyday life as it does on stage or in site-specific performance. Upon encountering the site, for instance, performers “may be ill equipped or differentially prepared to deal with conditions in comparison to those who usually occupy the place” but then they begin “literally battling with the elements,” and relate to the very same site in a work of invention (Pearson 2010: 171). Similarly, upon not finding any world-counterparts for their pains and bodily particularities, disabled people may move, act, and behave in ways to make the same environment afford new action possibilities within which their pains are minimized, and the insensitive substances of the environment are made sensitive and reciprocal to their pains, limitations and particularities (Dokumaci 2017: 400). These performances do not simply involve an affordance that would have existed in another form had it not been actualized, but the creation of an entirely new affordance lacking an already actualized world-counterpart. In both everyday living with disability, and in performance improvised within the disabling conditions of stage or site, the affordance being invented emerges not from the complementarity of the body and the given order of things, but from the lack of that complementarity instead. This is what turns disabled people’s everyday living into site-specific performances in their own right, and this is the very point of the theory of affordances that I seek to introduce. I define micro-activist affordances as the action possibilities that emerge from within the limits of existing affordances, as whatever it is that already-materialized affordances fail to provide is imagined, improvised and actualized in and through the fleeting space of performance. I introduce the theory of micro-activist affordances as a way to understand the radicality of the affordances invented at the margins of the existing world of collectively engaged affordances, wherever and whenever the latter no longer reciprocate our pains or complement our bodily singularities.

Why a new theory of affordances?

The difference between Gibson’s original theory of affordances (1979) and what I propose as a critical theory of affordances should now be clear. While Gibson’s theory refers to the action possibilities that emerge from the reciprocity between the organism and the

environment, I propose the theory of micro-activist affordances as a way to describe the affordances that come into being when that reciprocity cannot be readily found in the given order of things, in occupied niches, and among already socialized and materialized affordances. A theory of micro-activist affordances, in the way I define it, is concerned with the environment, not when it comes with an “inevitable bonding of [one’s]...interior states with companion objects in the outside” (Scarry 198: 162), but when it is bereft of that bonding and becomes inherently disorienting. What then follows is the opening of a space to make that environment afford otherwise and “slantwise” (Ahmed 2006: 41). Thus, when my interlocutors move their bodies and belongings in particular ways, they do not perform just another body technique. Instead, they bring into being what is otherwise an inherently absent world-counterpart (or rather what is absent as a counterpart in already materialized affordances). In moving their arms, fingers, and bodies in odd ways, in positioning their bodies and their world of substances and surfaces at crooked angles, in squeezing, biting, releasing, twisting and bending things, my interlocutors draw the contours of an affordance within which their pains are least felt, their discomforts minimized and their bodily forms and properties reciprocated by the properties of the world outside. To reiterate, these affordances are not just another way of actualizing the “same” action – be it walking, climbing stairs or buttoning a shirt – differently (for the same reason that we do not call the performances of actors on stage “just another way of doing things differently,” we cannot so label the improvisations of my interlocutors). Nor are they solely the invention of an entirely new affordance; they are the invention of an entirely new affordance when the environment – with its existing niches – becomes most devoid of readily available affordances, most ignorant of one’s bodily attributes, most unresponsive to one’s bodily pains and vulnerabilities. This is what makes these affordances micro-activist.

The creation of micro-activist affordances is to be found not just in my interlocutors’ everyday lives but throughout the vibrant history of disability activism. In taking up sledgehammers to dismantle the corners of sidewalks which, in their concreteness, remain utterly ignorant of the needs of wheeled bodies, disability activists carve out the affordance of, what Aimi Hamraie calls, “crip curb cuts” (2017: 102). Through agonizing crawls up the stairs to the United States Capitol in Washington DC, disability activists actualize the affordance of a ramp which, were it to be given material form, would save them from having to do this, to quote Scarry’s phrase, “dance of labor” (1985: 316). Whether the activism in question is overt or subtle, whatever the environment fails to provide in terms of objects, places, and already actualized and socialized affordances are brought into life through radical improvisations that I term micro-activist affordances.

The radical alterations that these affordance creations bring about become more obvious if the actual results are taken into account. My interlocutors’ improvisations, for instance, anticipate the action possibilities that “adapted” tools, such as buttonhooks and insoles, offer (see Dokumaci 2017: 401). “Guerrilla curb-cutting” by disability activists was followed by the materialization of, what Hamraie calls, “liberal curb cuts” instituted *en masse* by the city of Berkeley (2017: 97). The Capitol Crawl protest was instrumental in the passage of the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act. But the point I want to make is: all of these affordances (whether technological, architectural, infrastructural or legal) were first

actualized in and through performance. Performance, whether on or off stage, is where the act of making occurs, and an already existing materiality is imagined for something else than what it is and what it readily affords. And this is how I move beyond Elaine Scarry's account of making. As I have argued elsewhere, it is "performance [that] is our first and foremost affordance creation" (Dokumaci 2013: 114), not necessarily the artifact made.

Performance as affordance creation

[B]eyond the expansive ground of ordinary, naturally occurring objects is the narrow extra ground of imagined objects, and beyond this ground, there is no other. Imagining is, in effect, the ground of last resort. That is, should it happen that the world fails to provide an object, the imagination is there, almost on an emergency stand-by basis, as a last resource for the generation of objects (Scarry 1985: 166).

It is true that imagination has an emergency status, true that it comes into force at the boundaries. Micro-activist affordances are the "dance of labour" (316) that Scarry describes, however they do not necessarily have to end in the making of an artifact; indeed, they may well be embodied in the dance (318). Or even when an artifact does emerge from the micro-activist affordance, as in the case of Henri's improvised insoles, its making does not necessarily end with the existence of an artifact. As Henri's continuous adjustments to his insoles demonstrate, micro-activist affordances remain within the temporality of performance where use-process becomes inextricable from making. This is where I chose to locate the political work of micro-activist affordances: not where imagination culminates (that is, in the artifact made), but where it always remains in-the-making, that is, *performance*. I do so for three reasons.

First, with micro-activist affordances, I seek to foreground the dance of labor that disabled people perform daily, over and over, because the built world offers no object or infrastructure to undertake that dance on their behalf. As Ahmed writes, "for bodies to arrive in spaces where they are not already at home, where they are not 'in place', involves hard work...[and] painstaking labour" (2006: 62). In conceptualizing the theory of micro-activist affordances, I seek to acknowledge this continuous, painstaking and rarely recognized labor.

Second, the micro-activist theory of affordances, lying at the crossover between disability and performance, is concerned less with what is given durable form than with the dissolution of that fixity towards new horizons of possibility. If "crip theory questions – or takes a sledgehammer to – that which has been concretized" in the way "the curb cut... marks a necessary openness to the accessible public cultures we might yet inhabit" (McRuer 2006: 35), then a theory of micro-activist affordances located within the impermanence of performance puts McRuer's claim in empirical terms. Micro-activist affordances point to how action-possibilities can be exponentially multiplied rather than how they become ossified in the seeming fixity and inanimacy of things. Either because of the ephemerality of an action (as in the dance of buttoning a shirt), or because of how solid things are gradually unmade over lengthy performances (as in Henri's insoles), affordances created in and through

performance remain in a perpetual state of creation, making the concretization of any form, action or claim impossible.

In the “ethics of performance,” theatre scholar Alan Read writes, “As Michel de Certeau says: ‘Ethics... defines a distance between what is and what ought to be...’ This is the place where theatre occurs.... Theatre image unlike any other is always a possibility without closure, like the ethical relation which awaits creation” (90). Similarly, micro-activist affordances are ways of twisting, bending and queering an existing world of things towards new possibilities of action without telling what that affordance is or what it ought to be. Whether performance occurs in the fleeting gestures of a hand buttoning a shirt or over months of wearing and (deliberately) tearing a flipflop, performance remains the medium for the creation of an affordance that is not quite perfect, not quite there yet. Micro-activist affordances remain always-in-the-making within performance, which is “always *in movement* towards the forms that it is yet to take” (Dokumaci 2014: 105).

This brings me to my third point: to ask, how does this idea of disorienting affordances that disappear as they are being made enable us to reimagine disability activism?

Disorienting disability activism

Disability activism has long been associated with street protests and direct action, where self-identified disabled people and their allies demand access to public life, ask for changes to civil rights legislation, policies, and architectural codes, and denounce societal prejudice and discrimination. These political acts often involve a celebration of disability pride and empowerment, and reclamation of disability identity. Public visibility is not merely a part of traditional forms of activism, it drives their political force. The more visible disability is made, the more brazen its pride. The more loudly and “severely disabled” one is (McRuer 30), the more effective the performance of activism. But, as other scholars and activists argue, and as I demonstrate in this paper, disability activism does not have to remain limited to these sites and modalities. It may, as Hamraie argues in their concept of “epistemic activism” (2017: 132), take place as a form of knowledge-making pursued by disability maker-cultures, users as experts, activist architects and designers. It may entail other forms of engagement than literally “show[ing] up” in rallies, town halls, marches, or protests,” as elaborated by disability activist Alice Wong (2017). It may be done “accidentally” on the way to imagining “new kinships” and forming communities, as traced by Rayna Rapp and Faye Ginsburg (2011: 380). It may also, as I have shown, occur as micro and transient forms of affordance creations buried within the minute details of everyday life. If we limit our understanding of activism to the hyper-visible, intentionally engaged political actions pursued by self-identified minority groups, we cannot understand what is activist about buttoning a shirt differently. But if we define activism not by who engages in it, where and how, but by *what activism does and what it affords*, then disorienting buttons, twisting bottles, and transforming shirts into pullovers can also count as activism.

“When we tread on paths that are less trodden, which we are not sure are paths at all,” Ahmed writes, “*we might need even more support*” (2006: 170). When my interlocutors disorient the affordances of an otherwise inhospitable environment, they do not demand

better access in the way that disability activists have conventionally done. When they dance their pain out, when they exteriorize their vulnerabilities, when they express their corporeal particularities in and through their radical affordances, they do not adopt “severely disabled” positionings that McRuer associates with crip cultures. What my interlocutors and I (and potentially other disabled people) ask for instead – in and through or micro-activist affordances – can best be understood as what Mia Mingus calls, “access intimacy” (2011).

“Access intimacy,” Mingus writes, “is that elusive, hard to describe feeling when someone else ‘gets’ your access needs”, and unlike conventional understanding of access, it is secured, not necessarily through civil rights, legislations, obligatory mandates, but through an often times “unspoken, instinctual” communication – a communication that can take place between people who might not necessarily be disabled or consciously adopt a politics of disability or even had any exposure to it. In disorienting existing affordances of the world within most transitory of our performances, the most intimate spheres of our lives, and the subtlest forms of our gestures, we, as micro-activists, do indeed ask for access intimacy. Whether the dance we have just performed has an audience or not, whether the “inhabitable worlds” we have just brought into life have a co-inhabitant or not, depends on whether there is access intimacy or not.

Micro-activist affordances are highly vulnerable forms of activism because the access that they request is not asked through overt forms of activism but through entirely bodily means and within the most ephemeral of gestures that can go unnoticed and remain easily ignored. This is why such radical improvisations deserve our recognition and critical attention. Hence my proposal for a theory of micro-activist affordances.

References

Ahmed, Sara. 2006. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Bloomfield, Brian, Yvonne Latham, and Theo Vurdubakis. 2010. “Bodies, Technologies and Action Possibilities: When is an Affordance?” *Sociology* 44, no. 3: 415–433.

Canguilhem, Georges. 1989. *The Normal and the Pathological*. New York: Zone.

Davis, Jenny, and James Chouinard. (2017). “Theorizing Affordances: From Request to Refuse.” *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society* 36, Issue 4: 241 – 248.

Dokumaci, Arseli. 2013. “On Falling Ill.” *Performance Research* 18, no. 4: 107–115.

Dokumaci, Arseli. 2014. “Misfires that Matter: Habitus of the Disabled Body.” In *Misperformance: Essays in Shifting Perspectives*, edited by Marin Blažević, Lada Feldman, 91-108, Ljubljana: Maska.

Dokumaci, Arseli. 2017. "Vital Affordances / Occupying Niches: An Ecological Approach to Disability and Performance." *RiDE: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*. No: 22(3): 393-412.

Erevelles, Nirmala. 2011. *Disability and Difference in Global Contexts: Enabling a Transformative Body Politic*. NY: Palgrave.

Friedner, Michele, and Emily Cohen. 2015. "Inhabitable Worlds: Troubling disability, debility, and ability narratives." *Somatosphere*, somatosphere.net/2015/04/inhabitable-worlds-troubling-disability-debility-and-ability-narratives.html.

Gibson, James. 1979. *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Gibson, James. 1982. "Notes on Affordances," In *Reasons for Realism: Selected Essays of James J. Gibson*, edited by Reed, Edward, Jones, Rebecca, 401-18, Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Ginsburg, Faye, and Rayna Rapp. 2013. "Disability Worlds." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42, no. 1: 53-68.

Hamraie, Aimi. 2017. *Building Access: Universal Design and the Politics of Disability*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Hendren, Sara, and Catherine Lynch. (2018). *Engineering at Home*. engineeringathome.org/ (accessed July 20, 2018).

Meekosha, Helen. 2011. "Decolonising disability: thinking and acting globally." *Disability & Society* 26, no. 6: 667-682.

McRuer, Robert. 2006. *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability*. NY: NYU Press.

Mingus, Mia. 2011. "Access Intimacy: The Missing Link." leavingevidence.wordpress.com/2011/05/05/access-intimacy-the-missing-link/. (accessed July 20, 2018).

Miserandino, Christine. 2003. *The Spoon Theory*. cdn.totalcomputersusa.com/butyoudontlooksick.com/uploads/2010/02/BYDLS-TheSpoonTheory.pdf (accessed July 20, 2018).

Kafer, Alison. 2013. *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Kuppers, Petra. 2003. *Disability and Contemporary Performance: Bodies on the Edge*. NY: Routledge.

Leder, Drew. 1990. *The Absent Body*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Pearson, Mike. 2010. *Site-Specific Performance*, Basingstoke and New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Puar, Jasbir. 2017. *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Rapp, Rayna, and Faye Ginsburg. 2011. "Reverberations: Disability and the New Kinship Imaginary." *Anthropological Quarterly* 84 (2): 379–410.

Read, Alan. 1993. *Theatre and Everyday Life: An ethics of performance*, London: Routledge.

Rietveld, Erik, and Julian Kiverstein. 2014. "A Rich Landscape of Affordances." *Ecological Psychology* 26, no. 4: 325-352.

Told by an Idiot. 2018. *Let me Play the Lion Too*. www.toldbyanidiot.org/productions/let-me-play-lion-too/ (accessed July 20, 2018).

Sandahl, Carrie. 2003. "Queering the Crip or Crippling the Queer?: Intersections of Queer and Crip Identities in Solo Autobiographical Performance." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 9, no. 1-2: 25-56.

Sandahl, Carrie, and Philip Auslander. (Eds) 2005. *Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Scarry, Elaine. 1985. *The Body in Pain: The making and unmaking of the world*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stoffregen, Thomas. 2003. "Affordances as properties of the animal–environment system." *Ecological Psychology* 15, no. 2: 115–34.

Taylor, Diana. 2016. *Performance*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Wong, Alice. (2017). "Valuing Activism of All Kinds." www.rootedinrights.org/valuing-activism-of-all-kinds/ (accessed July 20, 2018).

¹ Mike Pearson is here comparing the relatively well-modulated conditions of the theatre auditorium to the unpredictable, wavering, constraining, and at times inhospitable conditions of site-specific performance.

² In fact, I doubt that the people I visited in remote suburbs of Istanbul would have even heard of the category of disability (*engelli* in Turkish), let alone had the choice to identify with it or not. I say “have the choice” because I believe that to identify with certain categories (or to consider them as fluid or reject them altogether) still requires some degree of exposure to and some familiarity with identity-based discourses – an exposure and familiarity that may not be available to subjects whose subjection occurs outside of Western discourses, from which identity politics (and its subsequent critiques) have emerged.

³ Here, I use the notion “queer” in consideration of its extended uses (particularly in the verb form “to queer”) which refer to that which intervenes, contravenes and upends whatever it is that has been established, normalized and conventionalized (see also Shildrick 2009: 190).

⁴ Here, Leder is reflecting on Herbert Plugge’s depictions of cardiac patients’ experiences (1962: 129–35 cited in Leder 1991: 81).

⁵ Told By an Idiot is a UK-based theatre company famous for its devised theatre and improvised performances which emerge from the collaborative work of actors on stage that is “rooted in the live event & thrives on a sense of spontaneity & risk” (see: <https://www.toldbyanidiot.org/about/>).

⁶ The visual materials are taken from a video that was submitted as part of my doctoral dissertation. Names of the participants are anonymized. Unless indicated by a translation note, all interviews are in English.

⁷ “Each thing says what it is....a fruit says ‘Eat me’; water says ‘Drink me’” (Koffka 1935: 7 cited in Gibson 1979: 138).

⁸ In their STS-informed ethnography, Bloomfield, Latham and Vurdubakis also draw from Scarry’s work to reflect on how affordances of technological objects “are not just picked-up but made real” through emergent assemblages of people, things, technologies, and contexts (2015: 424).