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“But look, this is my job!": Kivimedia, Ableism and the Reconfiguration
of d/Disability.





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This thesis examines the politics of language and d/Disability enacted by the participants in Kivimedia, a media workshop where d/Disabled persons are aided by media professionals in producing media content. Through an ethnographic analysis of Kivimedia radio broadcasts, the thesis develops a theoretical framework that weaves together linguistic anthropology with critical disability studies. My aim is to understand how ableist ideologies are both reproduced and challenged through linguistic practice. The thesis thus explores Kivimedia as a linguistic and discursive space where d/Disabled and a/Able-bodied interlocutors cooperate, interact and frame one another's speech, thereby indexing the broader discursive field of d/Disability politics.

Ultimately, the thesis contends that Kivimedia participants produce a d/Disability counterpublic through their radio broadcasting, that functions against the backdrop of an ableist public sphere. By establishing a public platform premised on the validity and value of d/Disabled experiences, Kivimedia allows d/Disabled speakers to "Crip" culture, that is, make evident, and possibly transform, the material positionalities of d/Disabled identities within an ableist structure and to interrogate their d/Disabled experiences outside ableist regimentation. In doing so, d/Disability becomes reconfigured as a valued, agentive interactional positionality, manifested relationally and dialogically with a/Able-bodied allies.



Through this analysis, the thesis theorizes the interconnection between d/Disability and ableism as something emergent both in and across interaction, as both relational and dialogical. When perceived as interactional achievement, one can understand and scrutinize the dialectical relationship between the abstract institutions that perpetuate ableism and discourses on d/Disability and the interactional practices that comprise everyday life. Within such an interactional understanding, we can analyze and critique ableism and its everyday violence and recognize how both individuals and groups work to expose, challenge and transform ableist structures.



Uppsatsen undersöker den bakomliggande politik som genomsyrar språket och förmedlandet av funktionsvariation i Kivimedia, en media workshop där funktionsvarierade personer blir assisterade av professionella inom mediebranschen i producerandet av medieinnehåll. Genom en etnografisk analys av Kivimedias radiosändningar, tillämpas ett teoretiskt ramverk som sammanför lingvistisk antropologi med kritisk handikappvetenskap. Mitt mål är att förstå hur ableistiska ideologier både reproduceras och motarbetas genom språkbruk. Därmed granskar uppsatsen Kivimedia som ett lingvistiskt och diskursivt rum där funktionsvarierade och funktionsnormativa interlokutörer samarbetar, interagerar och utformar varandras språkanvändning, en process som efterliknar och typifierar det bredare diskursiva fältet av funktionshinderspolitiken.

Uppsatsen argumenterar att medlemmarna i Kivimedia producerar en funktionsvarierad “motpublik” (counterpublic), som fungerar mot bakgrunden till en ableistisk offentlighet. Genom att etablera en offentlig plattform, som bygger på premissen av funktionsvariation som ett giltigt och värdefullt tillstånd, tillåter Kivimedia sina medlemmar att “Crippa” kultur, det vill säga göra uppenbart, och potentiellt förändra, funktionsvarierade identiteters materiella positioner inom en

ableistisk struktur. Samtidigt tillåts de rannsaka sina funktionsvarierade upplevelser utanför en begränsande ableism. Processen leder till en omkonfigurering av funktionsvariation som en värderad agens och legitim position, vilket manifesteras relationellt och dialogiskt tillsammans med funktionsnormativa personer.

Genom denna analys, teoretiseras sambandet mellan funktionsvariation och ableism som framväxande både inom och över interaktion, som både relationellt och dialogiskt. När vi förstår dessa tillstånd som en handling i interaktion, möjliggörs en analys och ifrågasättning av det komplexa förhållandet mellan ableism som dels en abstrakt struktur, som genomsyrar diskursiva förståelsen av funktionsvariation, och dels en växelverkan, som förhandlas i det vardagliga livet. Inom en interaktionell förståelse, kan vi kritisera ableism och det vardagliga våldet den medför, samtidigt som vi uppmärksammar hur både individer och grupper arbetar för att avslöja, utmana och förändra ableistiska strukturer.

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Introduction

It was the final evening of a camp I had been organizing for a Finnish disability NGO for the last six summers. I asked the group whether a significant transformation had occurred during our years together. One of the participants said that the mutual communication between participants and helpers had improved greatly. The group at the camps had stayed intact, and together we had placed focus on attempting to unlearn the stereotypical meanings and values attached to the roles of “helpers” and “participants”. The camp had in many ways become a space for collective experimentation while it also constituted a context of community where the members had an opportunity to mutually interrogate their disabled experiences. Importantly, the cooperative project was based on a dialogue between disabled and able-bodied persons. Relational habits were being altered for both kinds of social positionalities: we all needed to do collaborative work to achieve something together.

In hindsight, the overwhelming I felt at that moment was one of ambivalence. Yes, we were successful in coproducing a context where a collective understanding of comradery was achieved. By broadening the participatory roles, both the disabled and the able-bodied interlocutory positionalities were identified as valuable. However, some dubious problems persisted. Despite engaging transformative action on some level (in deciding when, how, and why to do something), on others existing hierarchies seemed strenuous (financial decision-making power belonged to able-bodied helpers). While within the small-scale ten-member camp a collaborative project was possible, the large-scale transformative potential remained unclear. In other words, the situation was an ambiguous one, complicated by many co-occurring phenomena.

At the point of writing, I have listened to hundreds of hours of radio broadcasts produced at *Kivimedia*, a media workshop organized by the disability NGO *Lyhty ry*¹. I have gained a sympathetic understanding of how the interaction between disabled and able-bodied interlocutors takes shape in a context where disability is in every way promoted as a valued, agentive and transformative positionality. Now, I understand that the ambivalent feeling is an outcome of our unconscious participation in the functioning of ableism, while we engaged in activities that

¹ A registered, non-profit organization.

consciously were aimed at avoiding, even criticizing ableist social reproduction. It is telling of the disability movement in contemporary Finland at large: despite being a Nordic Welfare State with an international reputation of including “equality” and “diversity” in all policymaking, there still seem to be lots unsaid about structural inequalities and how they are mediated in concrete action. Since 2015 (after the so called “refugee crisis” in the fall of 2015 and the #metoo movement in 2017), the public debate surrounding racism and sexism has (luckily) become diversified and amplified, but debates concerning ableism, indicating “discrimination in favor of able-bodied people” (Linton and Bérubé 1998: 9), is still rather mute. Disability and ableism remain both under-studied and under-theorized (Battles 2011), especially in Finland since Disability Studies has a minor foothold within social and political sciences.

The sense of ambivalence I have felt during my years of working together with the disabled have been the catalyst for this thesis. After the camp I am referring to, I attended a course in linguistic anthropology, that provided a theoretical ground in analyzing the ambiguities in disability and ableism. Especially helpful was the theorization on how social voices and figures of personhood are interconnected (Agha 2005a, 2007), how linguistic styles might be construed as “deviant” from the perspective of hegemonic listening subjects (Rosa 2018, Rosa and Flores 2017) and how social identities are emergent in interaction (Bucholtz and Hall 2005). Much in the same way as Jonathan Rosa investigates *raciolinguistic* ideologies in language, indicating how racialized speakers are enregistered² as deviant, inferior speakers in white hearing contexts and how forms of talk are seen as emanating from racialized speaking subjects, I reflected on the ways in which disability can be perceived as an enregistered voice, as a biographical figure of personhood tied to a specific way of speaking as determined by an able-hearing context, in something that could be coined as an *ablelinguistic* approach to language ideologies.

I proceeded by planning a fieldwork at a media workshop aimed at disabled persons in Southeastern Finland. I wanted to investigate how and under what circumstances disability functions as a framework from which people (both disabled and nondisabled) draw from when

² Indicating, according to Asif Agha, “Processes and practices whereby performable signs become recognized (and regrouped) as belonging to distinct, differentially valorized semiotic registers by a population” (Agha 2007: 81).

negotiating their sociopolitical agency. However, when I was supposed to start my fieldwork, Covid-19 started spreading in Finland and shortly thereafter, the workshop closed its doors.

Hence, with the guidance of my advisors³, I decided to utilize linguistic anthropology in examining already existing media material. I had encountered similar studies, such as writings from Debra Spitulnik (1996) on media discursivity in Zambia, and Harri Englund (2018) on public-service broadcasters and “fearless speech” in Finland. However, my focus on disability and ableism required material produced by disabled persons. I had previously been in contact with Kivimedia and had scrolled both their Youtube channel and Mixcloud account (uploaded under the label KiviRadio or Radio Valo), platforms to which they had uploaded material for the past four to five years. All in all, there are thousands of available episodes, so the material seemed abundant. Thus, it felt obvious to steer my attention to the material produced by Kivimedia, given that they have a varied range of programs, utilize many media forms and inhabit a linguistic field in which disabled and able-bodied hosts and guests are interacting.

Questions and Aims

Therefore, I am finding myself in investigating a media workshop where disabled persons are aided by media professionals in producing media content. On the one hand, I want to understand how ableism and ableist ideologies are linguistically mediated, reproduced and aligned with. On the other hand, I investigate how, and under what circumstances, they are resisted and criticized. I want to uncover how the social marginalization embodied by disabled persons takes shape in interaction with able-bodied people, and whether a collective political collaboration is established, given that Kivimedia is part of a disability NGO whose ethical purpose is to promote “the disabled’s, his/hers/their next of kin, and the whole societies wellbeing” (Lyhty/2021⁴).

The research questions I am posing are twofold:

- 1) How, and under what circumstances, are the ambiguities of ableist linguistic reproduction made evident in Kivimedia?

³ Thank you for all the advice, Elina Hartikainen and Andrew Graan, you both are inspiring, gracious and brilliant scholars on top of being wonderful persons.

⁴ <https://www.lyhty.fi/>

2) How, and under what circumstances, do d/Disabled⁵ speakers establish a linguistic space within which they have the possibility to interrogate, and at best, reconfigure their d/Disabled experiences outside the policing of a violent ableist spatial-temporal matrix?

I am inspired by the analytic stance taken by Don Kulick and Jens Rydström (2015) in their examination of disabled sexuality in Sweden and Denmark, when they situate their fieldwork only in institutionalized sites where positive actions are engaged to promote the sexual lives of disabled persons. The sites where such actions are lacking are much greater in number, but the scholars choose not to render them any space to avoid reproducing violent narratives. I aim at something similar, choosing to highlight circumstances when disabled persons and their negotiation of identity and belonging is not overdetermined within an ableist social reproduction. However, in order to understand forms of resistance, I am preliminary acknowledging the way in which a violent ableist normativity is reproduced in language and interaction. Thus, I aim to shed light on the ambivalence that I myself have felt: the ambivalence that imbues the veiled functioning of ableist ideologies and the deliberate, collaborative organizing against those forces, but importantly, how they mingle, intersect and imbue each other with indexicality and meaning.

Also, I aim to add a unique touch to that which Cassandra Hartblay (2019) defines as disability anthropology, signifying anthropological inquiry that grounds itself in critical disability studies. I seek to theorize the interconnection between disability and ableism through a perspective I have not encountered yet: as something emergent both in and across interaction. Molly Bloom (2019) investigates wheelchair basketball players using a combination of auto-ethnographic and narrative analysis and highlights how her disabled interlocutors do not align themselves with the practice of “passing”, indicating a project in which disabled agents “pass” as able-bodied ones, but rather, how they draw from narratives of competence and transformation in their negotiation of disabled experience. By my reckoning, Bloom’s ethnographic essay on disability is one of the few that positions itself primarily within the realm of linguistic anthropology.

⁵ I will give a thorough explanation for the utilization of *d/Disabled* rather than *disabled* or *Disabled* later in the section Theoretical Framework. In short, this allows me to speak about both the physical, physiological, intellectual or congenital impairment (disability) and cultural identification (Disability) simultaneously.

When perceived as an achievement both in and across interaction, we can understand the relationship between ableism as emanating from abstract institutions on the one hand, and as interactional practice of everyday life on the other. By doing so, we are finding ourselves in an opportune moment to reveal the complexities of a violent scenario and analyze how ableist structures can be muted and transformed, both individually and collectively.

The Field

Kivimedia is the media workshop of Lyhty ry, a Helsinki based disability NGO that has been active since 1993. Lyhty provides various services for disabled persons, including housing and day- and work centers where disabled persons engage in exemplary employment⁶, which indicates a contractual employment according to which all participants are paid a daily allowance, rather than an hourly or monthly wage. This circumstance will be elaborated on various occasions during this essay.

Information about Lyhty's political values and principles are scarce. However, I did arrange a brief telephone interview with a spokesperson for the organization. Based on our chat, Lyhty positions themselves as an "enabler"; they want to facilitate the agentic inclusion of disabled persons in the Finnish society. Criticizing a top-down, governing, approach to disability politics, Lyhty places the disabled and their wishes, needs and interests at the heart of their organizational praxis. Lyhty wants to nuance the conventional image of the disabled as "helpless", marginalized agents: by letting the disabled guide their activities and define their developmental goals, Lyhty allows disabled people to negotiate a positionality on their own terms. In other words, Lyhty, by their reckoning, invites a disabled gaze and provides visibility and a voice for the disabled; both of which are lacking in an ableist society.

Lyhty organizes niched workshops in addition to their "regular ones" (*yleistyöpaja*). Among them are the culture workshops, including the media-, music- and arts workshop, the café workshop, and the outdoors workshop. To my recollection, such niched workshops are rather unique in Finland. Importantly, they are organized in a way that makes them visible in the city scape, in contrast to many other disability organizations. For example, the café workshop is

⁶ Exemplary employment, despite being a somewhat dubious word, is the translation given by TEPA Term Bank, Finnish Terminology Centre TSK, for "työtoiminta" or "avoin työtoiminta", which indicates the contractual employment that I describe. An easier translation might be "day- or work activities".

based at IPI café in Kallio, Helsinki, with large glass windows towards Karhupuisto (*Bear Park*), one of the liveliest urban spaces in Helsinki. Here, disabled people prepare and serve food together with able-bodied professionals and garner a visibility that is atypical for disabled in the Finnish society. The media workshop is located close by, and significantly, has various segments that are aired on Låhiradio, a Helsinki local radio station, rendering them space in a stereotypical able-bodied hearing context.

Kivimedia is focused on media and communications. The outside viewer and hearer is informed by different but overlapping sections, some focusing on visual media, others on radio production. I have mainly focused my analysis on their radio broadcasting, which goes under the name Kivi Radio. However, I have chosen to utilize the term Kivimedia whenever I refer to the activities by the media (including visual and radio) workshop. Partly because it is utilized by themselves on social media (Facebook and Youtube), while it also allows me to speak about the entire operation at once.

The radio production consists of approximately ten recurrent programs (and maybe up to thirty-forty sporadic ones). Some are aired on a regular basis, others occasionally, some even just once or twice. This variation speaks to how the media workshop is, in addition to being a regular place for radio broadcasting, also a site for experimentation and negotiation of interests for the disabled members. Rather than explaining every single program that is produced at Kivimedia, I will shortly introduce the segments that are most relevant for this essay.

The most glaring contrast between the many programs is the designed address. Some regular shows are aired on Låhiradio during the weekends, in addition to being included in Kivimedia's Mixcloud and Youtube accounts, making the addressed audience more open-ended. These programs are "Miikan Punksuosikit" (*Miika's Punkfavorites*), "Alexin 90-luku" (*The 90s with Alex*), "Branderin Raskas Vartti" (*Brander's Heavy Quarter*), and occasionally, "Sami Helteen Siniset Hetket" (*Sami Heltee's Blue Moments*)⁷. The common element between all programs is that they are music oriented. Other segments are only aired on Kivimedia's Youtube stream, and later their Mixcloud account, indicating that the programs are more specifically aimed at those familiar with Kivimedia's broadcasting.

⁷ Miikan Punksuosikit is the one show that is aired regularly on Låhiradio. The others are aired irregularly on Låhiradio, and regularly on Kivimedia's social media accounts.

Miikan Punksuosikit, the show most prevalent on Låhiradio, has changed character since its establishment. Originally, Miika was playing his favorite punk music (hence the name), and having some minor monologues related to the punk scene in Finland in between songs. The obvious transformation the show has undergone is that guests, mainly punk musicians, have become regulars. Hence, the form has changed from a one-man-show to dialogue based. Usually, the segment consists of Miika interviewing a guest on the topic of their music and the punk scene at large. Also, various punk related events are discussed or advertised. Music wise, both Miika's and the guests' choices are played. Within the 30-ish minutes that the segment customarily goes on, approximately 5 to 8 songs are played, and almost half the time is dedicated to dialogue.

Shortly, *Alexin 90-luku* is a show consisting of Alex's recollections of pop culture phenomena from the 90's. The style mixes tropes of nostalgia and education. Every segment has one specific theme, such as a personality, a band, a TV-show or a game, accompanied by Alex's choice of music, all of which, of course, is 90's music. *Branderin Raskas Vartti*, as the name implies, is focused on heavy metal music, and runs for 15 minutes. The host is Sami Brander, and every segment involves brief reviews, biographies or discographies of a heavy metal band whose music Sami enjoys. *Sami Helteen Siniset Hetket* is a kind of music diary. Every segment includes one band that has touched Sami's (same name, different person) life at some point in time. He usually airs his top 3-5 favorite songs of the given band, while also reflecting on why and when this band has been meaningful to him.

Some of these hosts figure in examples in this essay, however, because of the music-heavy style of the respective programs, none of the segments are explicitly referred to. Principally, the segments I most commonly utilize in the analysis are part of "Kiviperjantai" (*Kivi Friday*), which is the all-encompassing program that is aired Fridays⁸. The show runs from approximately 2 to 4 hours and consists of every segment that has been produced during the workweek, both programs that are addressed to Låhiradio, and those addressed to Kivimedia's Mixcloud and Youtube account. Usually, the broadcast is hosted by two speakers who guide the intermediate segments in-between programs. Here, a transformation has occurred. Previously, the hosts were usually one disabled and one able-bodied speaker, however, now, the hosts are

⁸ That is, before Covid-19, since then there has been a pause in all broadcasts except *Miikan Punksuosikit* (as of March 2021).

both disabled speakers. The hosts engage in a dialogue that ranges from banter to opinion exchange about relevant news, discussions about work-related subjects, or general conversations about music, events, and weekend plans. The hosts also cue all programs that are aired, usually they voice some form of “over to you” interlocutory statements, that foreground the impending segments.

The programs that are aired on Kiviperjantai are numerous. I want to highlight three, since those are the ones, I repeatedly refer to throughout this text. Firstly, “Inkan ja Jasminin Juttunurkkaus” (*Inka’s and Jasmin’s Chatcorner*), is a segment where Inka and Jasmin, two disabled hosts, chat about topics ranging from sociopolitical issues related to their disabilities, pop culture, boyfriends and so forth. The genre is pure dialogue; the whole segment consists of a discussion in relation to one preconceived theme. The discussions are usually based on aid questions, which have been put together in unison with able-bodied helpers. Since the genre is one of opinion exchange, and the subject matters are relatively varying, the material I have gathered from this particular program is rather nuanced.

Secondly, “Jari Nordström Haastattelee” (*Jari Nordström Interviews*) is a show in which the reporter Jari interviews a guest either at the Kivimedia’s offices in Helsinki, at an organization he is visiting, or an event apropos the activities of Kivimedia. Jari often interviews in a semi-structured style; he has primary questions, but he oftentimes goes off-script, and associates freely in relation to something that the guest has uttered. Since Jari is generally interviewing able-bodied guests, the interactional balance becomes of interest, mostly because in some of his interactions the veiled reproduction and potential resistance of ableism becomes evident. I will take a comprehensive look at one such interaction in chapter three.

Thirdly, “Levyraati” (*Record Panel*), designates a gameplay format in which two hosts are anchoring a panel consisting of routinely four guests, with the intention of listening to songs, and scoring them between one to five points. The hosts have usually been circulated from week to week, however, later, it has become a set fixture that one of the hosts is an able-bodied speaker, Onni, who cohosts together with a disabled speaker who is changed from week to week. Members of the panel are both disabled and able-bodied members of various Kivimedia workshops, outside guests, such as musicians or other public personalities who have been visiting Kivimedia, or some of Lyhty’s workers. The genre renders lots of space to free-flowing

banter and is often humorous and quirky in its style. Given that the segment consists of interactions between many speakers, both disabled and able-bodied, the material from Levyraati has been the most valuable for my analytical purposes. Both in chapter one and two I have numerous examples from this particular show⁹.

For the remainder of this introductory chapter, I will give an overview of the way in which anthropologists have approached disability and ableism, before turning my gaze on the theoretical framework that illuminates the forthcoming analysis.

Anthropology and Disability Studies

Disability and ableism is a subject that, despite being under-studied in countries like Finland, has been epistemologically canonized within social sciences in large part thanks to Disability Studies being a scholarly discipline in the American educational system since the 90s. Cassandra Hartblay (2019) refers to the ADA generation, which points to scholars who have come of age and been educated after the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, a “landmark civil rights legislation that deeply shifted the way that people with disabilities participate in public life and changed the material landscape of the country” (2019: 26).

Still, the debate surrounding disabilities is revolving mainly around two overlapping but disciplinary distinct, even opposing, modes of explanation: the *medical model* and the *social model*. According to the World Health Organization’s categorization, which, Colin Cameron (2017) notes, is the most obvious manifestation of the medical model, impairment is defined as “any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological, or anatomical structure or function”, while disability is coined as “any restriction or lack of ability (resulting from an impairment) to perform an activity in the manner or within the range normal for a human being” (Barnes, Mercer and Shakespeare 1999: 23). We are informed by two narratives, which both are pathologizing disability as individual trouble: firstly, disability lies in the individual and is always manifested in a lack of some form of capability; secondly, the lack of capability is always

⁹ I have chosen to use all interlocutors’ real names in my analysis. Partly since all material is public content, and partly because I have received Kivimedia’s blessing for the project. To whom it may concern at Kivimedia, and by extension Lyhty: you are all doing fantastically important, inspiring and necessary work. You eloquently effectuate an anti-ableist project and encapsulate philosophical, political and emotional means and ends from which we all can learn. My critique is not levelled against any particular individual/s, but rather the ableist conventions we all share and live with.

measured in relation to a culturally codified conception of normativity. As Cameron puts it, within the medical framework, disability becomes conceived as “emerging as a result of something ‘wrong’ with the bodies of people with impairments, to be responded to by making normalizing, compensatory, or therapeutic interventions in the lives of people with impairments” (Cameron 2017: 2).

In contrast, Colin Barnes notes that within the social model, disability signifies “the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical and social barriers” (Barnes 1994: 2). According to Cameron, disability, conceived this way, is not “... a flaw that individuals have. Rather, it is a relationship experienced by people with impairments in a society in which the distribution of resources and opportunities has been organized without taking their needs into account. People with impairments have experienced relegation to the margins of society and been provided with segregated ‘special’ services in a ‘sheltered’ world of ‘care’” (Cameron 2017: 3). Michele Friedner notes, “the social model resembles the medical model in that it is designed to diagnose and recuperate disability, although it does so through intervening in the social as opposed to through medicine” (Friedner 2020: 37). In other words, disability becomes a positionality that people with impairments obtain in an ableist society; a positionality that places them at the outskirts in an ableist social reproduction, with little to no room for transformative action.

Despite acknowledging the medical explanation, I corroborate the social model when positioning myself in relation to disability as a cultural phenomenon. Social and cultural anthropologists in general have done the same. The study of disability as socially and culturally marked is nothing new for anthropologists; ethnographic accounts of impairment and disability ranges back decades (Ablon 1981, 2002; Benedict 1934; Bloom 2019; Frank 2000; Ginsburg and Rapp 2013; Hershenson 2000; Ingstad and Whyte; 1995, 2007; Kaznitz and Shuttleworth 2001; Klotz 2003; Kulick and Rydström 2016; McKearney and Zoanni 2018; Murphy 2001 [1987]; Shuttleworth and Kaznitz 2004; Staples and Mehotra 2016).

According to Cassandra Hartblay, within anthropology, disability has been typified as “chronic impairment that significantly impacts the daily life of a given individual” and “is a complex category with culturally contingent political and social meanings” (Hartblay 2019: 26). Hartblay supports critical disability studies, which positions disability as emergent in social

relations, and draws attention to what she coins “*disability anthropology*”, indicating an interdisciplinary orientation, as opposed to “anthropology of disability”, which suggests “a subfield of medical anthropology in which disability is the subject matter” (Ibid: 27). Hartblay identifies disability anthropology as an endeavor “... that engages the distinctive theoretical concerns and methodological approaches of transdisciplinary critical disability studies, enacted through a citational politics that foregrounds disability studies texts and scholars.” (Ibid). The author continues: “We might also think of disability anthropology as anthropology that draws on and contributes to disability theory and that starts from what Sini Linton has called the ‘disability studies perspective’ (2005)” (Ibid).

Hartblay contends that the distinction between disability anthropology and anthropology of disability is decipherable using the following criteria: “(1) Is the work part of a transdisciplinary conversation with scholars of critical disability studies, in terms of both theoretical approach and citational practice? (2) Does the work start from, and maintain focus on, the point of view of people with disabilities themselves?” (Ibid). According to Hartblay, examples of scholarship that engages in such work are Karen Nakamura’s (2013) ethnographic investigation of mental illness in Northern Japan, Sarah Phillips’ (2011) work on citizenship and adults with spinal cord injuries in post-Soviet Ukraine, and Michele Friedner’s (2015) examination of deafness in the business and technology hub in Bangalore.

Given such formidable criteria, I position my paper in a dialogical relationship with disability anthropology. However, I recognize that both in theoretical and citational terms, I sometimes find myself on the fringes of such a project. Partly because throughout my examination of language and ableism in Kivimedia, I emphasize how ableism is interactionally emergent between disabled and nondisabled persons (hence, my focus is not solely on the disabled person or disability per se, rather I gaze how disabled and able-bodied persons guide a space where disability is emergent in interaction), and partly because I acknowledge the critique against critical disability studies (CDS) as posed by material disability scholars, such as Simo Vehmas (1999, 2004, 2012, Vehmas and Watson 2016), Tom Shakespeare (Shakespeare and Watson 2001, 2014), Alison Keaf (2003, 2013) and Kirstin Marie Bone (2017). The critique here against CDS is one based on how an overt focus on the social, itself a contested category, in some cases hinders, rather than enables, a progressive pursuit of justice for disabled people.

Instead, the transformation of the material conditionality, rather than the abstract, intellectual theorization of disability should be the foci of Disability scholarship¹⁰.

In other words, I recognize the material critique as posed against critical disability studies. However, I still position myself within the realm of the latter. I do not perceive these two oppositional disciplinary stances as necessarily contradicting, rather, in order to produce a cohesive understanding and projection of disability, both approaches are needed. In my understanding, we need to consider disability as an epistemology, as an ontology, and as a relational lived experience. Firstly, we, both as a society and as scholars, must reflect on how we produce knowledge about disability, and what different discourses interplay and overlap in the production of the image of the disabled. It must hinge upon a mutual dialogue between scholars that approach disability from a medicalized standpoint, and those approaching it as socio-political signification, myself included. Secondly, we need to understand how this epistemologically patented approach to disability produces ways for disabled to “be in the world”. This necessitates a collaboration with disabled persons, in the sense that only they can experience disability as a condition through which one's reality is both negotiated and communicated. This perception can be likened to Cassandra Hartblay's understanding of situated Disability Expertise, in which disability becomes a vector of specific ontological knowledge (Hartblay 2019: 29-30). And thirdly, we must address the material positionalities of disability in contemporary social reproduction. This consideration requires a reflection of how disabled bodies and embodiment are affected by material surroundings and vice versa. We must also gaze how disabled materiality becomes emergent in and across interaction; how both disabled and able-bodied people dialogically align themselves with disability as a biological and cultural condition and relation.

These are all overlapping scales in the individual and collective experience of disability. Hence, they should be studied together, rather than separate. I find myself inspired by the theorization put forth by Richard Senghas and Leila Monaghan (2002), in their investigation of historical and linguistic issues of deafness in “hearing societies”. The authors note that the term Deaf indicates a cultural identity, a bounded sociohistorical phenomenon, while the term deaf indexes physiological deafness. For example, the authors note that losing hearing late in life

¹⁰ For more, see the discussion on Crip theory and its critiques in the section Theoretical Framework.

might make one deaf, but not necessarily Deaf. This problematic juxtaposition leads many to utilize the concept d/Deaf, in order to draw simultaneous attention to both positionalities, and to highlight the multidimensional nature of a complex situation. A similar dichotomy is found in h/Hearing people, where hearing signals the physiological ability and Hearing indexes the cultural and ideological construal of identity and category. Hence, d/Deaf people mediate a space in a h/Hearing society (Senghas and Monaghan 2002: 69-71).

Similarly, in order to speak about both the medical and social model simultaneously, to incorporate both material and critical disability studies within the same analytical concept, and to acknowledge both the epistemological, ontological and practical dimensions of disability, *d/Disability* is a viable concept to utilize. In my reading, this allows me to speak about both disabilities, as the physical, physiological, intellectual, or congenital impairment, and the cultural conceptualization, or individual identification as Disabled simultaneously. This perception is bolstered by the thinking of Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall (2016), who in relation to sociolinguistics and embodiment contend that the body is both *material* and *discursive* at the same time. Thus, I will use d/Disability hereafter, to underline how d/Disability is both medical and social, both material and abstract¹¹.

Also, I choose to talk about “d/Disabled persons” rather than “persons *with* d/Disability”. “The person-first narrative” (people *with* d/Disabilities) has been widely criticized for placing d/Disability outside the body (Titchkosky 2001, Hartblay 2019). Tanya Titchkosky (2001) condemns the people-first language as an apolitical expression of disability, which consequently “makes” disabled people as persons who “happen to have a measurable condition of limitation or lack which is regarded as having nothing to do with being a person” (2001: 129). Talking about d/Disabled persons rather than people with d/Disabilities allows me to underline how d/Disability is a state of being and doing, rather than a state of having.

When speaking about persons whose bodies align themselves with the notion of compulsory able-bodiedness¹² - nondisabled/able-bodied persons - I have chosen to utilize the term a/Able-bodied, a/Able or a/Abled person/speaker. Mostly because the term nondisabled in

¹¹ However, whenever I refer to or quote the writings of another author, I use the forms they themselves utilize in their analysis.

¹² The concept “compulsory able-bodiedness” is elaborated in the section Theoretical Framework, in relation to Crip theory.

my reading is somewhat dubious, in the sense that it positions d/Disability as the “category-at-center”; that disability is the “measurement” against which all bodies are positioned. This is not the case in an ableist society. On the contrary, as I have stated, d/Disability is established against the backdrop of the “normal” body, both physically and culturally speaking. Hence, I believe that a/Able-bodied speaks more accurately to what we are ideologically dealing with.

I also feel that d/Disability/d/Disabled are helpful concepts to use in order to engage in a linguistic anthropological interrogation of d/Disability. As Senghas and Monaghan argue, d/Deaf persons are subjected to particular categorization in a h/Hearing society. Similarly, in my understanding, d/Disabled speakers are positioned as certain kinds of speakers in an a/Able-hearing society. Dovetailing Asif Agha (2005a), d/Disabled speakers become enregistered as certain kinds of figures of personhood, that draws linkages to particular kinds of biographical, often marginalized, persona¹³. Thus, to conclude this introductory chapter, I will clarify how linguistic anthropology aligns with the notion of d/Disability and ableism, and how I aim to utilize sociolinguistic theorization in my analysis.

Theoretical Framework

Firstly, I ground my position within critical disability studies and Crip theory. Secondly, I foreground the benefits of utilizing linguistic anthropology as an analytical stance in the examination of ableism. Lastly, I give a brief overview on the structuration of the forthcoming chapters.

Crip theory has been widely used within critical disability and feminist studies (Johnson 2015; Kim 2017; Krieg 2017; Kulick and Rydström 2015; Löfgren-Mårtenson 2013; McRuer 2006, 2010, 2011, 2018; Rydström 2012; Schalk 2013, 2016; Vaahtera 2013). Robert McRuer addresses with Crip theory a critique of what the author deems “compulsory able-bodiedness”. Like compulsory heteronormativity, McRuer argues, compulsory able-bodiedness functions “by covering over, with the appearance of choice, a system in which there actually is no choice” (McRuer 2006: 8). McRuer draws from Michael Warner’s (1999) theorization of the normal, and

¹³ With some room for variation, the specific figure of personhood is most likely hinged upon the hearer’s perception of the d/Disabilities possessed by the speaker.

how, if the alternative is to be abnormal (d/Disabled), then normalcy (a/Able-bodiedness) becomes difficult to resist, even a compulsion (Vaahtera 2013: 78).

The historical origins of able-bodiedness, that McRuer situates as embedded into industrial capitalism, veils compulsory able-bodiedness as seemingly emanating from “everywhere and nowhere”, while allowing the “disciplines of normality” to obscure how we perceive some bodies as normal and some as deviant (2006: 8). McRuer positions Crip theory as the means by which compulsory able-bodiedness is disclosed, suggesting that d/Disabled bodies, especially severely d/Disabled ones, are the ones “best positioned to refuse ‘mere toleration’ and to call out the inadequacies of compulsory able-bodiedness” (Ibid: 31). Following David Halperin’s recognition of the term “queer”, McRuer imagines that Crip function best as “oppositionally and relationally but not necessarily substantively, not as positivity but as a positionality, not as a thing, but as a resistance to the norm” (Ibid: 32). Thus, Crip theory, according to McRuer, is about “transforming...- about criping- the substantive, material uses to which queer/disabled existence has been put by a system of compulsory able-bodiedness” (Ibid).

I am utilizing Crip in a similar vein. However, I acknowledge the critique posed against the concept. Simo Vehmas and Nick Watson (2014) argue that Crip theory has done little to produce any actual change for d/Disabled rights and social justice and has failed in transforming the material positionality that it in theory seeks to modify. More broadly, the theory has been labeled as too abstract to be employed in practical settings, or as stabilizing, rather than destabilizing compulsory able-bodiedness (Vaahtera 2013) or lacking a class perspective (Löfgren-Mårtenson 2013). Also, Crip, as McRuer points out, focuses on positionality and relationality, hence the overt focus on the social as a category of transformation has been criticized (Kafer 2013).

In my reading, too much emphasis is put on intentionality and agency when Crip is being debated. However, this attention stems from the theorization itself: Jens Rydström (2013) notes that McRuer understands Crip as “doing” rather than “being”; “It is something you are compelled to do, but also choose to do” (2013: 10). I understand Crip more as a vector of reflection than one of intention. Rather than constituting a scenario in which a d/Disabled person directly or indirectly *chooses* to do something that reveals and transforms their material positionality within an ableist institution, in my reading, d/Disabled persons, by drawing from

available narratives within the framework of agentive negotiation, make *the interactional meta-framework visible*¹⁴.

Hence, Crip becomes emergent in interaction, it can be intentional, but more often relational and reactional: Crip is both about being *and* doing. This reading of Crip allows me to avoid the dichotomization of d/Disability-a/Able-bodiedness, an additional critique posed to Crip theory (Vaahtera 2013, Siebers 2008), and renders the practice-being of Crip possible for both d/Disabled persons and a/Able-bodied persons. When Crip is emergent in interaction, it becomes a vector through which all negotiation of agency can take place in *dialogue* between d/Disabled and a/Able-bodied people. By perceiving the relation between d/Disability and the ableist surroundings as emergent in interaction, I argue that the functioning of ableist normativity becomes visible, and, at best, open for transformation both in and across interaction, which demonstrates the ultimate goal of McRuer's utilization of the concept.

As expressed, my understanding of ableism as a form of interactional achievement, positions my research in a dialogue between critical (and material) disability studies and linguistic anthropology. I position myself within Bakhtinian and Peircean sociolinguistics and perceive language and linguistic praxis as inherently dialogical and intertextual (Agha 2005a, 2005b, 2007; Bauman 2004; Bauman and Briggs 1990, 2003; Bucholtz 2011; Bucholtz and Hall 2004, 2005; Gal 2003; Hanks 1987; Inoue 2003a, 2003b, 2006; Irvine 1996; Noy 2009; Ochs 1992). Two concepts I use throughout the essay are worth mentioning: *indexicality* and *addressivity*.

Indexicality, a Peircean concept, is one of the three fundamental ways in which signs relate to their referents. Kira Hall and Ayden Parish write: "indexical links are based on existential connections, rather than arbitrary cultural convention (symbol) or similarity of qualities (icon). Peirce identified causality as a potential source of these existential links; an early example was his weathercock, whose position is dictated by the direction of the wind and which therefore indexes this causal force (Peirce 1932-1958, CP 2.286)" (Hall and Parish 2020: 2). In other words, thirst indexes the need for water, a wedding gown indexes the marriage ritual,

¹⁴ Which, in the context of ableist social reproduction, are the discursive and material manifestations of ableist institutions surrounding d/Disabled experience.

quirky punchlines indexes stand-up comedy et cetera¹⁵. According to the authors, “indexicality also describes the ways in which contexts are constructed and made recognizable through language, as indicated by Silverstein’s (2003) *creative* or *entailing* indexicality.” (Ibid).

Helpful is also the following description of *indexical orders*:

“As subjects are embedded in multiple networks simultaneously, their actions may have varying meanings within these social systems. These differing indexical orders (Silverstein 2003) construct a range of possible linkages between forms and meanings, as the agents constructed in one indexical order are presupposed, yet also created anew in another when new contexts and new forms of meaningful action becomes possible” (Ibid: 3).

In my analysis of Kivimedia, I often refer to how utterances or speech styles are indexical for some pragmatic or metapragmatic phenomena¹⁶. For example, the ways in which d/Disabled language is spoken on the one hand, or glossed on the other, constitutes an indexical for either a socio-political positionality, a particular linguistic ideology, or a conscious project to achieve something, someday. One order of index might, for example, point to the linguistic regimentation of d/Disability, while another order of index signifies a collective, collaborative project of cohesiveness.

Shortly, addressivity, a Bakhtinian concept, signals how speech has a specific recipient design, signifying the “quality of being directed at someone” (Bakhtin 1986: 95). In other words, all speech aimed at an audience has a particular addressivity structure. Speech can have many orders, or levels of addressivity, indicating that a speech event, depending on the style, genre and rhythm, can be addressed at many audiences simultaneously (see Irvine 1996). In the analysis, I focus on how particular utterances are addressed at specific audiences, or how utterances by varied speakers within the same segment construes an addressivity structure with numerous orders.

In chapter one, I investigate how an ableist linguistic ideology is reproduced at Kivimedia. Mainly, I turn to Michael Lempert’s understanding of mimetic practice and indirect speech acts (2012, 2014). By utilizing the concept of “recasts”, indexing repetition in order to

¹⁵ Helpful is the *index* finger, the one generally used to “point at” things in the surrounding milieu.

¹⁶ “Pragmatic” signalling what language achieves in interaction, and “metapragmatic” pointing to how the surrounding social, political and cultural milieu shapes language use.

cue error recognition, I examine how a/Able-bodied speakers gloss over and regiment the language used by d/Disabled speakers. A hierarchical relationship between a/Abled supervisors and d/Disabled members and a reproduction of a violent linguistic normativity is established. However, I contend that mimetic praxis, in terms of alignment, also signifies a collective effort to create an image of a cohesive speaking We. Hence, value and agency is rendered to all speakers, both d/Disabled and a/Abled, engaging the collective. Thus, mimesis in Kivimedia is inherently ambivalent, merging two linguistic projects.

In chapter two, I explore Kivimedia as a site of public-making. Publics are a concept widely used in both linguistic anthropology and discursive analysis (Cody 2011; Errington 2001; Fraser 1992; Gal 2003; Gal and Woolard 2001; Gaonkar and Povinelli 2003; Hill 1998, 2008; Hirschkind 2001, 2006; Landes 1988; Spitulnik 1997; Urla 2001; Yeh 2009, 2012, 2016). I turn to Michael Warner (2002), who draws from the historically significant theorization by Nancy Fraser and Jürgen Habermas in his understanding of publics and counterpublics. I argue that Kivimedia, when imagined as a form of *d/Disability counterpublic* that functions against the backdrop of an ableist public sphere, allows d/Disabled speakers to draw from narratives that constitute d/Disability as a status of competence and validity, manifesting d/Disability as a positionality of value and transformative action.

In chapter three, I consider how members of Kivimedia Crip culture. I contend that Kivimedia as a d/Disability counterpublic allows d/Disabled speakers to negotiate and reconfigure a d/Disabled identity outside the policing of an ableist spatial-temporal matrix. In doing so, ableist normativity is resisted and criticized. d/Disability becomes a vector through which all interaction flows, and the linguistic reproduction of ableism is subverted: at best, for a/Able-bodied speakers to take part in the counterpublic, they must change footing according to the image of d/Disability as a position of value and competence. This reconfiguration of d/Disability takes place as an interactional achievement, both in and across interaction.

The Regimentation of a Linguistic Normativity and the Ambivalence of Ableism

Like all speech, the language spoken in Kivimedia radio programs is diverse and inconstant. Various speech events are taking place: the listener is faced with versions of monologue, dialogue and open-ended group discussions, all varying in substance. On the one hand, we are informed by organized and controlled language, informative in nature, often read straight from transcripts that have been produced collectively between d/Disabled and a/Able-bodied speakers. On the other hand, speech events take the form of chit-chat, spontaneous babble, situations where the language spoken is free flowing, imbued by personal anecdotes, humor and leakages. In “Jari Nordström Haastattelee” (*Jari Nordström Interviews*), the form follows a rigorous interview, while the speech in “Levyraati” (*Record Panel*) aligns with group banter, opinion exchange, and funny storytelling.

With these words, let us turn to the linguistic ambiguities that are taking place in Kivimedia. The introductory example is a collection of extracts from a Levyraati episode, in which a d/Disabled host, Inka, and the a/Able-bodied co-host, Onni, are anchoring a panel consisting of three d/Disabled guests. The sequence commences by Inka’s and Onni’s dialogue on the happenings of the workweek, and the ensuing plans for the coming weekend. A short exchange, and the concurring presentation of one panelist, Kalle, takes place in relation to anecdotal reflection on a Dingo (former Finnish pop-band) musical, that Kalle has seen at a theater in Tampere earlier in the week. Then, another panelist, Jasmin, is introduced:

Inka: Ja tällä puolella, eli minun Inka Maja Timgrenin Juttunurkkauksen toinen...

[Inka: On this side, my, Inka Maja Timgren’s Chatcorner’s other...]

Onni: Toinen puuhanainen!

[Onni: Other mover and shaker!]

Inka: Toinen puuhanainen eli Jasmin Bäckström, mitä kuuluu?

[Inka: Other mover and shaker Jasmin Bäckström, how are you?]

Onni: Ei sentään puumanainen mutta puuhanainen, eiksni.

[Onni: Mover and shaker, not cougarwoman, am I right.]

Jasmin: Kyllä! [Laughter!] Kyllä! Moi vaan, kaikille.

[Jasmin: Yes! [Laughter] Yes! Hey, everybody.]

Inka: Mitä kuuluu näin viikonloppuna?

[Inka: How are you this weekend?]

Jasmin: Ihan hyvää.

[Jasmin: I'm good.]

Shortly after, a third guest, Sasha, is presented:

Inka: Ja sitten vielä, mutta ei vähäisimpänä, eli minun paras ystäväni ja kollegani Sasha Alexander Tauber, mitäs kuuluu?

[Inka: And last but not least, my best friend and colleague Sasha Alexander Tauber, how are you?]

Sasha: Ihan hyvää.

[Sasha: I'm good.]

Onni: Elokuvamies on täällä taas.

[Onni: The movie-man is here again.]

Sasha: Kyllä.

[Sasha: Yes.]

Onni: Ja tuota, onko sinun mielestäsi, kun tietää että elokuva.. Niin onko elokuvissa musiikki tärkeää?

[Onni: And well, do you think, when we know that movies... Is the music important in movies?]

Sasha: Kyllä.

[Sasha: Yes.]

Onni: Minkälaista musiikkia, vaikka nyt tulevaan Myllypuro elokuvaan voisi laittaa...

[Onni: What kind of music, could be put into the coming Myllypuro movie...]

Sasha: No siis jotain tuollaista suomipop, iskelmä, balladi, euroviisu tyylistä.

[Sasha: Well, something like Finnish pop, "iskelmä", ballades, Eurovision style.]

...

Onni: Joo. Miten tuota. Millä tolalla tuota Malmin lentokentän asiat?

[Onni: Yes. Well. How are things coming along with Malmi airport?]

Sasha: Joo-o. Mitä tuohon nyt pystyy sanomaan. Mut siis...

[Sasha: Yee-es. What can I say? But it's...]

Onni: ... pystyykö siihen nyt enää sanomaan mitään?

[Onni: ... can you say anything anymore?]

Inka: Mmm.

[Inka: Mmm.]

Sasha: No, ei nyt ainakaan enään kovin hyvää. Ollaan tässä, käräjäoikeudessa ollaan että saatais jatkoa aikaan, mutta Helsingin kaupunki on nyt sanonut ihan ehdottomasti ei.

[Sasha: Well, it's not going all too well. We're here, we're in the district court so we could continue somehow, but the city of Helsinki has given a definitive no.]

In my reading, this sequence constitutes a microcosm of the linguistic praxis in the Kivimedia production. Firstly, we are informed how the a/Able-bodied host Onni is guiding the speech sequence. When Inka proceeds with the introduction of the panelist Jasmin, Onni “takes over” the speech event, by suggesting that “puuhanainen” (*mover and shaker*) describes Jasmin’s role in the segment “Inkan ja Jasminin jutturunokkaisu” (*Inka’s and Jasmin’s Chatcorner*), a program where Inka and Jasmin dialogically interrogate various subject-matters related to their d/Disabled experiences. He imbues the situation with humor and draws linkages between the resemblance of the words “puuhanainen” and “puumanainen”, a word loosely translating to “cougar”, indicating an older woman who seeks sexual relations with a younger male. Importantly, everybody involved finds the wordplay funny, especially Jasmin, the main recipient of the joke, who has difficulties in concealing her laughter when responding to the subsequent questions posed by Inka.

Secondly, when Sasha is introduced, the guidance by Onni takes the form of aid: Onni suggests that “elokuvamies” (*movie-man*) is indicative of Sasha’s hobbies. He advances support questions that Sasha can draw from to negotiate his taste in music. Also, Onni picks up a subject

that is of interest to Sasha; he raises a question in relation to Malmi airport, a heated topic the last years given that the city of Helsinki seeks to build housing on the property, which is regarded by many Helsinkians, including Sasha, as a cultural heritage site.

Thirdly, simultaneously with guidance and suggestion on behalf of Onni, something additional is taking place. The listener encounters a collective that is speaking to “us”. Statements like “my best friend, and colleague” made by Inka, signifies the close friendship and professional relationship that she shares with Sasha. Her earlier statement “my, Inka Maja Timgren’s Chatcorner’s other.... mover and shaker”, indexes approximation with Jasmin, in that they share both a productional context (they have a program together) and a situational category, one of the “mover and shaker”. Thus, a sense of proximity and community is negotiated among the d/Disabled talkers. Importantly, Onni, the a/Abled speaker, also partakes in the collective, as indicated by the genial attitude that all speakers have in relation to him (he makes them laugh, signifying that they value his attribution to the collective), and by the fact that he knows them well (he comes up with nicknames both to Jasmin and Sasha which are symptomatic of their participation in Kivimedia). Also, he understands how to position himself in relation to them (making a joke to Jasmin, asking Sasha about Malmi airport).

Hence, despite overtly regulating the speech event, Onni’s guidance is one of a collaborative kind: when Onni is guiding and suggesting, he simultaneously is helping, aligning and easing. He facilitates the negotiation of a space within which the d/Disabled speakers can partake. In other words, an ambiguous linguistic praxis is taking place: on the one hand, Onni is unconsciously correcting and shaping d/Disabled language. On the other hand, he is consciously co-operating with the d/Disabled speakers to create a sense of a cohesive speaking We. Such ambiguity can be understood as the outcome of a complex co-existence between an ableist linguistic ideology and a collective effort to create a space where d/Disabled speakers negotiate belonging.

Therefore, in this chapter, I examine how a normative linguistic regimentation is mediated in Kivimedia, while also noting the ambiguities saturating the production of potentially violent normativity. The ambivalence stems from how even the most seemingly violent situation always include various, miniscule “serious games” (Ortner 2006). Firstly, by drawing from Michael Lempert’s understanding of mimetic practice, I elaborate how mimesis, and especially

the practice of “recasting”, function in Kivimedia as a form of normative linguistic regimentation and as an implementation of an ableist linguistic ideology. Secondly, I proceed by arguing that the practice of recasting is not a conscious repetition of ableist violence, but rather it takes place in a covert fashion. The social reproduction of ableism has an invisible dimension, even within a progressive political project like Kivimedia.

The sporadic, unconscious reproduction of an ableist ideology is co-existing with an ethical, conscious production of a social space that both construes, and is drawing from, a narrative of collaboration between d/Disabled and a/Abled interlocutors. Two levels merge: one is signifying a level of standardization, and another is indexing a level of experimentation and cooperation. Together they construe the linguistic praxis of Kivimedia.

Recasting as a form of Linguistic Regimentation

Michael Lempert identifies “mimetic practice” as “events of behavioral imitation in which such imitation is reflexively grasped and understood to count as social action” (Lempert 2014: 380). According to the author, mimetic relations are rarely, if ever, a dyadic relation between an original and a copy. An overt focus on the two-ness between copies often directs our attention away from the “true scope, effects, and even violence of mimetic projects” (Ibid: 385). Lempert points to the policing of racial and ethnic authenticities and intellectual regimes as familiar examples of violent mimetic practice. Considering labor as a framework for mimesis, the author states that education instructors often use forms of “scaffolding”, a conscious widening or highlighting of a differential so that “novices can better see how far they are missing the mark” (Ibid).

Notably, Lempert contends that in second-language learning instructors use “recasts”- “repetitions that correct prior speech and cue error recognition” (Ibid). Lempert also signals how dance teachers mimic their students’ bad dance moves in order to help them see the differential and narrow it. In Kivimedia, forms of recasts are quite usual. As in the initial example, in many episodes of “Levyraati” (*Record Panel*), the a/Able-bodied host Onni engages in recasting the speech of his d/Disabled cohosts.

For example, recasting becomes evident in a Levyraati segment that runs as a part of a “Kiviperjantai” (*Kivi Friday*) episode being aired on Låhiradio, a Helsinki based local radio

station, rather than on Kivimedia's Youtube stream and Mixcloud account (which is the case as usual). The episode airs on the Friday of the national week of media education (*mediakasvatuksen teemaviikko*). In the excerpt, the a/Abled host Onni and the d/Disabled host Sami negotiate the rules for scoring the songs:

Line 1: Onni: Kerrotko vaikkapa miten näitä pisteitä annetaan?

[Onni: Should you tell how we assess these songs?]

Line 2: Sami: Joo no siis ykkösestä viiteen..

[Sami: Yes, from one to five...]

Line 3: Onni: Eiku nollasta.

[Onni: No, from zero.]

Line 4: Sami: Niin siis nollasta, nolla on niinkun tosi tylsä.

[Sami: Yeah, from zero to five, zero is like really boring.]

Line 5: Onni: Niin, nolla on siis huono. Se ei ole... se ei ole muuta kun että vedetään vessasta alas [flushing sound].

[Onni: Yes, zero is like bad. It's not... nothing remains but flush it down the toilet [flushing sound]]

Line 6: Sami: Ja sitten hetkinen, mitäs sitten...

[Sami: And then well, let's see...]

Line 7: Onni: Ykkönen.

[Onni: One.]

Line 8: Sami: Niin, ykkönen on niinkun...

[Sami: One. One is like...]

Line 9: Onni: No ykkönen on sääli piste, vähän hyvä muttei kuitenkaan hyvä.

[Onni: Yes, one is a pity point. Almost good, but not really...]

Line 10: Sami: Niin. Ja sit kakkonen on sellanen ihan ok.

[Sami: Yeah, and two is sort of ok.]

Line 11: Onni: No siin on jo jotain.

[Onni: That already has something.]

Line 12: Sami: Mmm...

[Sami: Mmm...]

Line 13: Onni: Kolmonen, keskiverto...

[Onni: Three, average...]

Line 14: Sami: Niin, ja sit nelonen on ihan melkeen hyvä, ja sit vitonen on sit kyllä...

[Sami: Yes, and four is almost good, and five, well, is...]

Line 15: Onni: Vitonen on kyllä sit ihan, Alex tietää [fanfare sound]

[Onni: Well, five is really. Alex knows [fanfare sound]]

Line 16: Onni: Fanfaarit soi.

[Onni: The fanfares are sounding.]

Lines 3 and 5 indicate how Onni recasts, and consequently is practicing a glossing of d/Disabled language. Rather than allowing Sami to recount the scoring system on his own, Onni recasts: he repeats¹⁷ the prior speech of Sami¹⁸. On the one hand, as Lempert notes, the goal might be a correction in order to cue error recognition either on behalf of the speaker Sami, the other panelists or the listener (the hearer listening to Lähiradio at the given moment). On the other hand, the situation can be understood as one where Onni is recasting Sami's utterances to minimize the intertextual gap to radio-talk, the dominant register within the social dimension of radio broadcasting.

In other words, rather than letting Sami make his own formulations, Onni is practicing a form of translation, by glossing and recasting d/Disabled language into something that can be deemed as radio-fluent speech. Thus, the recast-interaction between the d/Disabled speaker

¹⁷ “No, from zero.” and “Yes, zero is like bad. It’s not... nothing remains but flush it down the toilet.”

¹⁸ “Yes, from one to five.” and “Yeah, from zero to five, zero is like really boring.”

(speaker 1) and the a/Abled speaker (speaker 2) goes as follows: utterance 1 made by speaker 1; utterance 2 made by speaker 2 *recasting* utterance 1; utterance 3 made by either speaker 1 or speaker 2, principally carrying similar information as utterance 1, but formulated in a way that minimizes the intertextual gap to a stereotypically a/Able-bodied register, or in the metapragmatic context of radio, an a/Abled radio-register.

The sequence raises questions on various levels. Recasting is not by any means consciously addressed as violent practice by Onni, the a/Abled speaker, rather, it is taking place in a veiled fashion. In Kivimedia, d/Disabled people are encouraged to go beyond their d/Disability: rather than advocating the criticality of “passing”, the a/Able-bodied helpers and cohosts are attempting to create conditions where the d/Disabled talkers can tap into frameworks such as competence, interest and cooperation, when negotiating agency. This becomes evident when the content of various programs is investigated. The interest that Miika¹⁹ has for the punk scene in Finland is eloquently transformed into a both informational and entertaining punk series that is unique in its kind in Finland. Sami Helle’s²⁰ program taps into the broadcaster’s music taste in a way that narrates his life, relations and feelings through experiences of music. Jari Nordström’s²¹ interest and competencies in interviewing and doing journalism is translated into an intriguing series where different personalities and socio-political questions are interrogated.

Thus, rather than intention, Onni’s recasting is an invisible effect of ableism; an unconscious ableist stance that Onni embodies in the dialogue: a case that Tanya Titchkosky (Titchkosky 2001: 130-131) deems as “speaking-on-behalf” of d/Disabled people, a troublesome situation being rooted in broader social, governmental and cultural conceptualizations of d/Disability. In the example, the speaking-on-behalf of the d/Disabled can be read as a form of violent linguistic practice despite not being overtly so. Not unlike suggested writing on your smartphone (your phone predicting and suggesting what word you want, or are about to write), by recasting, Onni is unwittingly engaging in a sort of *suggested talking*. By recasting (lines 3, 5, 7, 9, 11 and 15), Onni is suggesting what Sami is supposed to say next. Sami follows-up on the

¹⁹ In “Miikan Punksuosikit” (*Miika’s Punkfavourites*)

²⁰ In “Siniset Hetket” (*Blue Moments*)

²¹ In “Jari Nordström haastattelee” (*Jari Norstström Interviews*)

suggestion on lines 4 and 8 and somewhat on line 10, but seems a bit startled on line 12, contently using the hesitation marker “mm”, rather than providing a reformulated utterance.

Hence, Onni is guiding the speech event, by suggesting how the following utterance should sound like. By suggesting and guiding, Onni is practicing a form of standardization: he is regimenting how the language-at-use will take shape. In other words, by suggesting (utterance 2 by speaker 2), Onni is providing a framework from which the d/Disabled speaker is drawing from in the next utterance (utterance 3). When performed continuously, the framework generates a standardization of d/Disabled language in relation to a/Abled-radio-speech. Utterance 3, if performed by a d/Disabled speaker, must in some shape or form minimize the intertextual gap to utterance 2, otherwise the sequence either repeats itself, or, as on lines 13, 16 and 17, the utterance is performed by the a/Able-bodied speaker, to make the leakages from radio-talk as indiscernible as possible²².

Further, the pattern of recasting leading up to suggestion, and suggestion providing a framework for standardization, inevitably escalates into a form of normalization. For the d/Disabled speaker, Sami, to be compatible with the speech-sequence, he must align with an expectation of normativity placed upon him by the a/Abled speaker, Onni. Again, if the sequence is concluded by an utterance that fails to align with the suggested normative framework, the sequence is repeated, or if not, instead performed by the a/Able-bodied speaker. In doing so, the intertextual gap between radio-talk and d/Disabled-talk is minimized, and the broadcast can continue, with the lack of better words, fluidly.

Linguistic Ideology and the Expectations of Normativity

Therefore, we are informed by a situation where the d/Disabled speaker is policed into alignment with expectations of normativity as defined by a/Able-bodied speakers. Similarly, Jonathan Rosa and Nelson Flores (2017) argue that speech performances by racialized speakers are shaped and overdetermined by the reproduction of raciolinguistic ideologies through racially hegemonic modes of perceptions. Rosa and Flores argue that raciolinguistic ideologies produces racialized speech performances and speaker-attributes seen as emanating from racialized

²² Here, my argument hinges upon the realization of radio broadcasting being a socio-historically ableist institution, stereotypically created by and for a/Able-bodied speakers. For a discussion on restricted media participation experienced by d/Disabled in an Australian context, see Stewart and Spurgeon (2020).

speakers, consequently positioning racialized speaking subjects as deviant and inferior from the perspective of white listening subjects, even when they engage in linguistic practices that would be congratulated had they been produced by white speakers. For example, according to the authors, US Latinx can achieve the highest education, and draw from “a range of multilingual practices to navigate various interactions in ostensibly effective ways”, and still be perceived as linguistically stigmatized due to their bilingualism. Rosa (2016) shows how “self-identified monolingual white teachers in a Chicago high school viewed their bilingual Puerto Rican principal, who held a doctorate in education, as intellectually and linguistically inferior” (Nelson and Flores 2017: 8-9).

Further, Rosa and Flores contend that institutionally reinforced whiteness produces racial disparities framed in terms of “...changing the individual behaviors of racialized populations rather than structural change of racialized white supremacist institutions” (Ibid: 19). Thus, the authors call for a careful consideration of how structures of privilege and power are reproduced or disrupted through the institutionalization of linguistic diversity. Such a reconfiguration seeks to connect language struggles to a broader contestation of power, highlighting how the hegemonic white listening culture can transform its modes of perception in order to allow racialized speaking-subjects a broader social range (Ibid: 20).

Correspondingly, the consequence of recasting in Kivimedia, despite not being overt, is a form of violent normativity. Sami is the one who is obliged to align with the expectation of normativity placed upon him by Onni, who in the context of Kivimedia’s radio broadcasting embodies both his personal role as an a/Able-bodied speaker and a figure of the ableist, institutionalized radio-talk, which indicates an expectation that something should be said in a certain manner. Rather than allowing Sami to formulate his utterances in a spontaneous way, and extensively, let the d/Disabled talker’s voice remain unaltered in an a/Able-hearing context, Onni polices Sami to change footing according to the framework and genre of a/Abled-radio-normativity. However, the situation is not indicative of Onni’s desire to dominate, rather, we are informed about how ableism functions unconsciously within a speech event that takes place within an ableist meta-framework.

In other words, considering that the episode is aired on Låhiradio, and assumedly addressed to a/Abled hearers, Sami is obliged to perform a kind of a/Able-fluent speech in order

to be included into the a/Able-hearing context. The pattern resonates with Rosa's and Flores's argument on how racialized speakers must align themselves according to normative white-hearing expectations. Hence, what we are dealing with is a form of linguistic ideology: an ideology that is manifested through expectations on d/Disabled talkers, as defined by a/Abled hearers, fitting them into a pre-conceptualized mold. By glossing over Sami's utterances, Onni is mediating this ideology, and extensively ensuring a minimal slippage from a/Able-bodied radio-talk. In a comparable interchange, Onni is glossing and recasting the utterances made by the d/Disabled cohost, Alex, when they discuss the first song played on an episode of *Levyraati* (aired 17.1.2020):

Line 1: Alex: No niin siinä kuultiin eka kappale, se oli siis toi the Garden yhtyettä sitten mitä kuunneltiin ja biisin nimi oli Clench to stay awake, oli ensimmäinen...

[Alex: Well, we just heard the first song. It was a song by the band Garden, and it was called Clench to stay awake, it was the first...]

Line 2: Onni: Kyllä. Se oli Epitaph Recordsin, tuota, artisteja.

[Onni: Yes. It was one of the bands of the Epitaph Records.]

Line 3: Alex: Kuten Bad Religionkin!

[Alex: Like Bad Religion!]

Line 4: Onni: Kyllä, kyllä, ja tuota joo...

[Onni: Yes, yes, and well, yeah...]

Line 5: Alex: Hyvältä toi kuulosti.

[Alex: It sure sounded good.]

Line 6: Onni: Oliko sun mielestä ihan perus musaa, vai oliko erikoista?

[Onni: Do you think it was sort of basic, or a bit unusual?]

Line 7: Alex: No siin tuli eka hidastust ja sit nopeutta. Laulajan toi lauluääni kuulosti Queens of the Stone Age:n laulajalta että, samanlainen ääni enemmän toltä... Pikkasen että.. Hyvältä toi kuulosti.

[Alex: Well, sort of, it was first slow, then fast. The singer's voice reminded of Queens of the Stone age's singer, similar voice but more... a little bit like... it sure sounded good.]

Line 8: Onni: Joo oliko erikoista musiikkia sun mielestä?

[Onni: Yeah, was it sort of unusual music in your mind?]

Line 9: Alex: Joo oli se musta hyvää...

[Alex: Yeah, it sure sounded good...]

Line 10: Onni: Mutta oliko erikoista?

[Onni: But was it unusual?]

Line 11: Alex: Oli se joo, hyvältä se kuulosti...

[Alex: Sure, it sure sounded good...]

Line 12: Onni: Selvä... Tuota noin, tuota noin. Mutta mehän ei tätä biisiä arvioida vaan meidän vieraat...

[Onni: Alright... Well, well. We are not the ones evaluating the song, but our guests...]

By repeating not once, but twice the utterance “was it unusual?” (*oliko erikoista?*), Onni is suggesting that the song has something essentially unusual about it, and that its unusualness is worth underlining. More importantly, he is also testing, by suggesting what Alex should be uttering (which is that the song is unusual). Interestingly, Alex does not correspond with the suggestion, but rather underlines that “it sure sounded good” (*kuulosti kyl hyvältä*). Alex's opinion that “it was first slow, then fast” (*no siin tuli eka hidastust, ja sit nopeutta*) can be read to signify that he categorizes the song as an unusual one, but does not voice it specifically, which seems to be an annoyance to Onni. Hence, Onni threpeats²³ his question, the reasons for which can be read as twofold. Firstly, the desire to highlight the song's unusualness can be understood as a situation where Onni inclines to voice his own opinion, indexing that the song is unusual in his mind. Secondly, the sequence can be perceived to index that the unusualness of the song is the opinion that *should* be stated in the context of radio-talk, from the perspective of normative

²³ As in repeats, but three times.

expectations placed upon speakers. Or, alternatively, Onni wants to return to the script written for the segment, which in any case exemplifies a process of normalization.

Similarly, Michael Lempert notes that when variation in mimetic practice is “styled to be seen, the differential exhibits ‘recipient design’, or what Bakhtin (1986: 95) called ‘addressivity’, the ‘quality of being directed at someone’” (Lempert 2014: 381). According to Lempert, “anything so styled steers attention toward the differential, such that the differential may make one wonder what people are up to by means of it” (Ibid). Following Lempert, it seems like Onni’s repeated questioning is a form of recipient design: the differential is highlighted in order to tell someone something, which draws attention to what Onni is “up to by the means of it”.

We again find us in the model constituted previously²⁴. I noted that whether the recasting fails; if speaker 1 does not reformulate utterance 3 to minimize the intertextual gap to utterance 2 (and the register at hand), the sequence is repeated, or if not, the sequence ends by speaker 2, the a/Abled speaker, voicing the recasted utterance in order to make the speech event radio fluent. The recasting sequence is exemplified by the exchange on lines 5 through 12.

On line 6, the first of three questions signaling the unusualness of the song, Onni is engaging in suggested talking: he is framing his question in a manner that signifies a desire for a specific answer. Line 8 is straight-forward recasting: Onni is seemingly not content with Alex framing the song as merely sounding good, thus he attempts to recast the opinion voiced by Alex, to achieve an expected answer. When Alex fails, or rather, chooses *not* to align with the expectation, and instead cheerily frames the song, again, as merely sounding good, Onni attempts to recast on line 10 an already recasted utterance: the sequence repeats itself. Interestingly, when Alex on line 11 *again* chooses not to conform with the expected answer, Onni, to maintain the situation as radio fluent as possible²⁵, proceeds by uttering hesitation markers “Alright, well, well.” (*Selvä... Tuota noin, tuota noin.*) before placing the focus on the present guests. Firstly, the hesitation markers can be read as an attempt to cue error recognition or even a form of “scaffolding”, indicating that the song in fact is unusual, the problem being that the d/Disabled speaker does not recognize this. Secondly, the utterance following the

²⁴ Utterance 1 made by speaker 1, followed by utterance 2 by speaker 2 recasting utterance 1, followed by utterance 3 made by either speaker 1 or speaker 2.

²⁵ By which I mean he could not possibly “four-peat” his question, could he?

hesitation markers, is Onni's active choice not to repeat the sequence, but rather change the trajectory of the situation.

Onni's act of focusing on the guests rather than on Alex's reluctance to align with the question, indexes an indirect speech act. Michael Lempert (2012) defines indirect speech acts as illocutionary acts that is "performed indirectly by the way of performing another". In other words, a speech act is indirect when uttered in order to typify, or address, something or someone else than the immediate other/s in the speech event. Lempert separates *indirect performativity* from *indirect addressivity*. The former addresses phenomena such as hints, insinuations, irony and metaphor; utterances in which "the speaker's utterance meaning and the sentence meaning come apart in various ways" (Lempert 2012: 180, Searle 1975: 59). The latter constitutes scenarios where "the action is clear but the actor isn't", for example when a parent is coerced by complaining to the grandparent, or when political figures are denounced in graffiti (Lempert 2012: 181).

Also, Lempert argues that when contextualized, indirect speech acts typify "a form of metapragmatic regimentation", constituting "principles for the construal of action". Hence, Onni's use of hesitation markers, followed by a focus on the panelists rather than on Alex, can be perceived as an indirect speech act²⁶ that points to, and informs us about, the metapragmatic framework, which is a form of gameplay within a context of radio broadcasting, aimed at an audience. Hence, through Onni's indirect speech act, we can extract "principles for the construal action"; we are informed *from* where, *to* where the spoken language is addressed, and how, under these conditions, a repetition of the opinion exchange between Onni and Alex is not possible, because it would hamper the rhythm of the gameplay where the language needs to flow in a certain way. Therefore, Onni chooses to focus on the guests, to typify a "metapragmatic regimentation".

Lempert notes that in order to solve forms of indirectness we need to go beyond the speech event and focus on who the act is "to" and "for". For example, we can follow how speech events are aimed at "superaddressees", such as voters in elections. In the example, by moving beyond the speech event into the metapragmatic framework within which the speech act is taking

²⁶ More closely an *indirect performance*.

place, we can see how Onni's threepeating of the question on whether the song is unusual is a questioning aimed at the superaddressees rather than Alex. Intuitively, the superaddressees seem to be the other panelists, to whom the utterance is indirectly addressed. We can understand the situation in terms of Onni introducing the unusualness of the song for the panelists who are about to score it.

However, we can also understand the situation as one where the panelists are immediate addressees, and the listeners to the radio program are the superaddressees, which constitutes a scenario where the unusualness of the song is aimed at an external imagined audience, rather than anyone present in the speech event. To do so, the spoken language must follow patterns that make it comprehensible to the listener, the superaddressee. This takes us back to the argument on how a/Able-bodied speakers normalize the language spoken at Kivimedia. Recasting and indirect speech acts are used to denote a form of policing of d/Disabled language, by the means of suggestion, standardization, normalization and insinuation. These mechanisms make the language "radio normative". However, as I have stated, such policing in Kivimedia is an invisible tool of ableism. A conscious, collective effort is needed if speakers want to divert from a seemingly totalizing structure.

A Narrative of Collaboration and the Cohesive Speaking We

Hence, despite exemplifying a regimentation of a normativity structure (*something* said, by *someone*, *someway*), the mimetic practice in Kivimedia can also be read in terms of *collective alignment*. To do that, we need to understand the linguistic landscape as constitutive of many co-occurring indexical orders. When Onni glosses, recasts, or insinuates, the first order index signals the concrete policing taking place: an a/Able-bodied host guiding and shaping the language spoken by d/Disabled hosts, creating a process of normalization. On the surface, the policing is indeed violent: recasts, suggestions and hints regiment a certain type of speech that becomes hierarchically positioned as desirable in the speech event. This process inevitably informs us about recipient design, evoking questions about what Onni "is up to by the means of it". However, the intentionality that imbues Onni's linguistic praxis is not a clear-cut violent attempt at transforming d/Disabled language. As noted, Kivimedia is a social and discursive space where d/Disabled people are encouraged to draw from narratives of competence, interests

and cooperation when negotiating their belonging and agency, rather than one that advocates the importance of “passing”.

Therefore, the situation also indexes an attempt on Onni’s behalf to make the gameplay as coherent and approachable as possible, both for the panelists and the superaddressees. The same applies to the scenario where Onni not only repeats, but threepeats a question addressed to Alex: despite indexing an aspiration for a preconceived answer the sequence also signals an effort to introduce the unusual attributes of the song to all imagined hearers. In other words, the second order index of Onni’s suggestions and insinuations draws attention to a collaborative, creative project. Rather than merely engaging in normative regimentation, Onni can be understood to be consciously cooperating.

To include as many speakers as possible in the speech event and to construe an image of a coherent speaking We, rather than a speaking I, the language spoken is guided; the intertextual gap that is minimized is in relation to the register-of-Us, rather than an a/Able-bodied radio-register. Two seemingly different levels of interaction merge: policing and collaboration are taking place simultaneously, underlining how the construal of normativity is always ambiguous. To perceive the violent regimentation of a linguistic ideology as a totalizing process in Kivimedia would do us a disservice by overly simplifying a complex situation. Ayden Parish and Kira Hall (2020) write:

“The utterance of the pronoun we is the action that rhetorically creates a group that includes the speaker – a group that the pronoun then reflexively points to (as opposed to a they, for instance). That is, agency and social meaning are co-constitutive through the mechanism of indexicality: Indexicality points toward the actions of agents, while at the same time imbuing those actions with meaning and thereby agency. A speaker of the word we is pointing toward some constellation of actions that bind a certain set of actors together as a “we,” thereby giving those actions meaning and the actors agency. “(2020: 2).

Dovetailing Parish and Hall, the linguistic praxis in Kivimedia can be understood as constitutive of a collaborative project between d/Disabled and a/Able-bodied speakers; all members are speaking-on-behalf-of-us (a coherent We), rendering agency and meaning to all interlocutors within the pragmatic framework. Hence, Onni’s indirect speech act in his dialogue

with Alex “opens up” the speech event, extending validity to all partaking speakers. Likewise, the recasting between him and Sami, despite indexing an unconscious normalization of d/Disabled language, can also be read as an index for a clarifying, cooperative project. Rather than cueing error recognition on behalf of the listener, Onni recasts to make the sequence as open-ended as possible, inviting other speakers to collaborate in the speech event. In other words, he invites a d/Disabled voice and gaze into a traditionally a/Able-hearing context²⁷. Additionally, Alex’s reluctance to align with the question concerning the unusualness of a song signifies creative stance-taking whereby principles of action are presented to the collective We: along the lines of “It’s okay not to think this song is unusual, because it sure sounded good”²⁸.

In my perception, the ambiguities between two opposing but co-occurring projects constitutes a relationship between the Bakhtinian notions of linguistic centripetal and centrifugal forces (Bakhtin 1981). On the one hand, a normative, ableist linguistic regimentation entails a centrifugal linguistic force, manifesting itself through a recognition that the spoken language is supposed to sound like *something*, narrowing and systematizing it (as the examples of recasting have shown us). On the other hand, we are also informed by a centripetal force, in the sense that the centrifugal aspect function in order to create a platform through which as many voices as possible are spoken and heard: a scenario that broadens and multiplies the linguistic landscape centripetally if perceived from a farther-away-perspective.

Hence, the meaning saturating the one and the same linguistic event becomes mutated: by focusing on either the first order index or second order index, we point to very different means and ends within the same speech event. We are informed about co-occurring interactional levels, indicating that even not the most violent situation can solely be defined as an overdetermined, totalizing one. Rather, within that situation a possibility for contingency and creativity is always achievable, echoing Sherry Ortner’s argument on how totalizing political “serious games” are always imbued by other, small-scale ones: the rules for which are dependent on, but never overdetermined by, the dominant one (Ortner 2006). In other words, the mimetic practice in

²⁷ Hence, Onni creatively mediates Lyhty’s motivational principle; the invitation of a d/Disabled gaze in all action.

²⁸ Thus, Alex’s utterance can also be read as an indirect speech act, making the speech sequence rather compelling, considering that Onni’s reply also classifies an indirect performance. If so, both, despite uttering words to each other, are not *speaking* to one another, but rather, both address the panel or the listeners of the radio show, reminding us of Judith Irvine’s “shadow conversations” (Irvine 1996).

Kivimedia can simultaneously typify a reproduction of an a/Abled linguistic ideology, while also leaving space for a narrative of creative, dialogical collaboration.

To clarify this approach, let us consider one more Levyraati example, where Onni and Niki, a trainee in Kivimedia, contemplate with one panelist, Lasse, why David Bowie's song "Prettiest Star" is worth listening to. The sequence has been preceded by a mentioning of how bad of a year 2016 was, when both Bowie and Prince died, a loss that was felt by all:

Onni: David Bowie:lle terveisiä sinne taivaalliseen laulukuoroon. Ja tuota Princelle kanssa. Toivottavasti saataisiin lisää tällaisia virtuooseja, että ei menis ihan muoviseksi tämä nykymusiikki.

[Onni: Greetings to David Bowie, to the heavenly choir. And well, also for Prince. Hopefully, we'll get more of these virtuosos, so that the contemporary music doesn't go all too plastic.]

Niki: Niin. No mutta palataan tähän raatiin.

[Niki: Yeah. Well, let's get back to the panel.]

Lasse: Noh, David Bowie on kyllä ihan klassikko, sitä vois kuunnella vaikka olis mikä mieli. Ja tällaista se on, tylsää kun ne kaikki hyvät tähdet menee ja kun näkee nykymusiikkia on enemmän sellaista virkeää ja tällaista. Mut kyllä niitä artisteja on jos etsii mut pitää kyl sanoa että vitonen kyllä.

[Lasse: So, David Bowie is like a classic, you could listen to him no matter your mood. This is how it is, boring when all these great stars go away, and contemporary music is more sort of jolly and so forth. Although, sure there are a lot of artists if you search for them, but I must give five points.]

Onni: Joo, se on nykyään tuntuu myös vähän siltä, siis artisteja on paljon mutta ne mitä soitetaan niin se on aika sellaista tasapaksua. Mut sit taas just et se puuttuu sieltä kentältä niinkun tehosoitossa tällaiset David Bowien kaltaiset niinkun mestarit, mestari säveltäjät ja sovittajat, enemmän mennään niin kuin helpolla kunhan löytyy joku hauska hokema niin sitten, sillä saadaan niitä kuunteluja.

[Onni: Yes, nowadays it sorts of feel like that there are a lot of artists, but those that get played sound kind of homogenous. But then again, we sort of lack in the mainstream sound these great masters like David Bowie, master composers and master arrangers, more often the bar is set very low, as long as one finds some funny refrain, which will garner lots of listeners.]

Niki: Niin mut se on vähän niinkun joka paikassa että niinkun halutaan nuoria ja ei haluta vanhempia ihmisiä, ja halutaan nuoria, enkä nyt siis. Tulee tässä niinkun yksi juttu mieleen että mihin haluttiin nuorempia ihmisiä, niin tuota en nyt mainitse nimiä mutta puhun Bumtsibumista (disguised as a cough). Niin siihen haluttiin tuota, en maininnut nimiä vaan yskäsin.

[Niki: Yeah, but it's sort of how it is everywhere, young people are sort of preferred over older people, the young people are desired, I don't want to. I have in mind one example where young people were preferred; I don't want to name any names but I'm talking about Butsmibum (disguised as a cough). They wanted younger people, I did not name anything, I just coughed.]

Onni: Juu kyllä, mä en ainakaan tuosta saanut selvää. Mutta sitä se on, sitä se tuppaa olemaan.

[Onni: Yeah sure, at least I didn't get what you were saying. But it's like that, that's how it is.]

In the sequence, mimesis, in terms of alignment, indexes a cohesive action. First, Lasse proceeds by voicing that David Bowie is a “classic” (*klassikko*, used in Finnish to denote something assessed as being good for a long time, often intergenerationally). He feels that contemporary music lacks the swagger of Bowie, despite acknowledging that quality artists are discoverable if one has the propensity to search for them. Then, Onni's utterance mirrors the one made by Lasse: according to Onni, past virtuosos such as Bowie and Prince are lacking from today's music, a genre that he deems as homogenous and plastic-sounding. The statement indexes alignment: Onni establishes a footing according to Lasse's opinion. Considering that Niki chimes in with a similar verdict, that also glorifies times gone by (his opinion focuses on the worrisome effects of prioritizing young people over old), we are informed by how d/Disabled and a/Able-bodied speakers cooperate by aligning with one another, to voice an opinion as a cohesive unit.

Therefore, the trope from which all speakers are drawing from is one of collaboration. In Kivimedia, mimetic practice becomes a tool for establishing discursive belonging to a cooperative enterprise; both d/Disabled and a/Able-bodied speakers interact and change footing according to a common linguistic and political horizon. The intertextual gap which is manipulated and minimized is the gap between the speaking I and the speaking We. The collaboration is mediated linguistically and manifested in both social (d/Disability NGO) and technological (radio broadcasting) conditions. In other words, d/Disabled and a/Able-bodied speakers are co-engaging in producing a public space, where both sociopolitical positionalities

are represented. In doing so, all speakers within Kivimedia are rendered agency and validity, and allows Kivimedia to make comments as a public where d/Disability is a valuable interlocutory positionality.

The argument I have pursued indicates that while mimetic practice potentially designates a form of normative regimentation, a contingent project of cooperation is always present in Kivimedia. We are informed by the Bakhtinian notion of the dynamic coexistence of centripetal and centrifugal linguistic forces; the simultaneous functioning of language stratification and the ever-present heteroglossia. A constant mixing of registers and voices within a seemingly rigid framework is taking place. On the one hand, restrictions for language-use are produced by the conditions between a/Able-bodied and d/Disabled speakers. On the other, collaborative, dynamic narratives constitute a seemingly open-ended, heteroglossic, linguistic space. This complex state of affairs grounds Kivimedia as a site of public-making: circulating discursive phenomena is being anchored in social, political and technological conditions. This ambivalent condition is according to Michael Warner typical, even necessary, for publics and counterpublics.

Kivimedia and the Mediation of a Counterpublic

I ended chapter one by considering the ambiguities that permeate the linguistic praxis of Kivimedia. On the one hand, rigid ableist phenomena are reproduced. On the other hand, a collective, conscious construction of a speaking We is established. Two levels cooccur: a linguistic ideology guides and conditions the language spoken at Kivimedia in potentially a violent, but never an overdetermined fashion, always leaving room for other “serious games”, within which creative cooperation between d/Disabled and a/Able-bodied speakers is achieved.

This cooperation, the project according to which speakers align themselves, produces a politization of d/Disability. It is inherently a political endeavor to render d/Disabled speakers’ linguistic space within a context that is imbued by an a/Able gaze. Kivimedia, in addressing both d/Disable and a/Able-bodied hearing contexts²⁹, becomes a platform where d/Disabled people garner a voice in relation to conditions where they often are both socially and politically muted: d/Disabled people are enabled to address the ableist surroundings that polices them. d/Disability becomes represented in a visible, transparent and effective way, engaged both by d/Disable and a/Able talkers³⁰. And, importantly, d/Disability becomes a part of discursive circulation; a vector through which vernacularized narratives of music, humor and journalism filters through. Hence, Kivimedia constitutes a linguistic project that is anchored in political (d/Disability politics), technological (radio broadcasting) and social (a dialogical relationship between d/Disabled and a/Able talkers) conditions.

In doing so, Kivimedia can be weaved into the conceptualization of publics and counterpublics as described by Michael Warner. To foreshadow the forthcoming examination on how Kivimedia is marked as a site of public-making, I want to turn to an interaction between Inka and Jasmin in “Inkan ja Jasminin Jutturnurkkaus” (*Inka’s and Jasmin’s Chatcorner*), a show where two young d/Disabled women discuss subject-matters ranging from political issues concerning d/Disability, to relationships and popular culture. In the following sequence, Inka and Jasmin elaborate on their sense of security, or lack thereof:

²⁹ I have previously exemplified how some programs are broadcasted on Kivimedia’s own Youtube and Mixcloud channel, while some are aired on Lähiradio. I will elaborate this topic later in this chapter.

³⁰ Signalling that Kivimedia’s linguistic mediation of a collaborative project is in line with Lyhty’s motivational ethics, as defined in the introduction.

Inka: Milloin on turvaton olo? Mä viihdyn täällä töissä, mun on turvallista käydä töissä. Melkein kaikkiin voi luottaa, jos tarvii apua niin pyydän apua. Joissain hommissa en tarvitse apua, selviydyn täysin itsenäisesti. Jos tarvitsen apua, saan sitä.

[Inka: When do you feel insecure? I enjoy my time here at work, I feel secure to come to work. I can trust almost everybody, if I need help I'll just ask for it. In some chores I don't need help, I can do them independently. If I need help, I'll ask.]

Jasmin: Minulla on turvaton olo jos joku tulee liian lähelle minua, tulee vaikka silleen kysymättä halaamaan. Tai kysymättä pitää kädestä kiinni. "Tai voinko mä vähän taputtaa sua olalle", tai halata tai tulla lähelle. Oman reviirin turvallisuus on tärkeää. Jos mun henkilökohtaisille reviireille tullaan kysymättä niin se tuo turvattomuutta.

[Jasmin: I feel insecure if someone comes too close to me if someone hugs me without asking first. Or holds my hand without asking. Or "can I just tap you on the shoulder" or hugs or comes too close. A sense of my own space is important. It gives me a sense of insecurity if someone enters my space without asking.]

Inka: Tuohon mäkin haluan muutaman sanan sanoa. Mulla on välillä turvaton olo, ei joka päivä. Välillä täällä töissä on tilanteita että mua ahdistaa, tai en tykkää. Yleensä kun syödään yhdessä niin siinä on tullut yhden toisen kanssa vähän silleen. Se haluaa huomiota mutta ei kysy vaan pyytää sitä muulla tavalla. Esim koskettelee, pöydän alla tai sit välillä jopa potkii. Siihen pitäis tulla muutos. Mutta en sitten mene sen pajalaisen seuraan.

[Inka: I'd like to add a couple of words to that. I sometimes feel insecure, not every day. Sometimes here at work I feel anxious, or I don't like it. Often when we eat together there have been some problems with another. That person wants attention but does not ask for my permission. For example, that person touches me, under the table or kicks me. That should change. But then I don't seek that workshopper's company.]

...

Jasmin: Kenelle pitäisi sanoa jos ei tunne turvalliseksi työpaikalla? Kannattaa sanoa ohjaajille.

[Jasmin: Who should I contact if I feel insecure at our workplace? I should tell the supervisors.]

Inka: Ohjaajalle. Jos ohjaaja ei ole mukana, niin sit sille joka on siinä lähellä. Ohjaajille ja apu-ohjaajille, niihinkin voi turvautua.

[Inka: Supervisors. If my supervisor is not present, then to some other helper close by.
Supervisors or helpers, you can always count on them.]

From this excerpt, we yield information about how Kivimedia organizes a public platform as well as how Inka and Jasmin are a reflective part of that public. Michael Warner notes that “to address a public or to think of oneself as belonging to a public is to be a certain kind of person, to inhabit a certain kind of social world, to have at one’s disposal certain media and genres, to be motivated by a certain normative horizon and to speak within a certain language ideology” (Warner 2002: 10). The “normative horizon” that Warner refers to, can in Kivimedia be defined as the collective pursuit of a cohesive speaking We, that both d/Disabled and a/Able-bodied speakers address. The media and genre at Kivimedia’s disposal are framed by radio-talk. Also, we get a sense of how Inka and Jasmin position themselves as d/Disabled agents within the agentive sphere that Kivimedia negotiates. Hence, the scenario indicates how, and under what circumstances, Kivimedia functions to produce frameworks of agency and belonging for its d/Disabled members; we are informed by the “social world” that encompasses Inka and Jasmin.

On one level of index, we perceive two similar figures of personhood conversing on a subject related to their political agency. Inka and Jasmin balance the identification of being in a position to do things independently with having the opportunity to ask for help when needed, a source for security for them. Both speakers are aware of what makes them feel insecure in their work environment: whenever their personal space is entered into without permission, or whenever a co-worker harasses them without a rhyme or reason. In other words, they perceive themselves as belonging to a social network that both encourages them and hinders them on some occasions. The reflexive inclusion of the social environments affecting their experiences of d/Disabledness resonates with Don Kulick’s and Jens Rydström’s understanding of the locus of d/Disabled personhood, which according to the authors is dispersed, “it resides not in the body, but across a network of relations that need to get coordinated in order to ‘allow me to be able to flourish as an individual’” (Kulick and Rydström 2015: 15).

However, Inka and Jasmin go beyond this: they creatively utilize the genre and media at their disposal to negotiate crucial factors in their well-being at Kivimedia. They do not solely acknowledge themselves as being dependent on a network of relations in order to flourish, rather,

they seemingly co-create a space that enables them to excel together. An interesting stance-taking, that construes a specific poetic structure³¹, is taking place: Inka and Jasmin build upon one another's utterances in a turn-taking fashion, aligning themselves with an image of a speaking We, rather than a speaking I³².

Hence, on a second level of index, a collective endeavor for unification imbues the interaction, revealing metapragmatic information about the context where the speech event is taking place. In addition to constituting a scenario where two similar figures of personhood are conversing, the sequence also indexes the social, political and technological context that encompasses the speech event. We are informed about *who* is speaking, from *where* and to *whom*; from which context Inka and Jasmin are speaking, and to which contexts the speech is addressed.

These considerations are indicative of how Kivimedia organizes itself as a kind of d/Disability counterpublic: the overarching argument of this chapter. Hereafter, I investigate Kivimedia as a site of public-making, and more closely, as a counterpublic. I highlight three distinct but overlapping levels of "counterpublicity". Firstly, I establish footing in relation to Warner's conceptualization of publics and demonstrate the kind of counterpublic that Kivimedia produces. Secondly, I describe how Kivimedia as a d/Disabled counterpublic aligns with other sympathetic counterpublics, indicating how the project positions itself as a political player by aligning with tropes of political contestation. Lastly, I contend how Kivimedia as a counterpublic provides a framework from which d/Disabled people can draw from in negotiating validity and value. In doing so, it provides a space where d/Disabled people can resist ableist hegemony.

d/Disability, Kivimedia and Public-Making

Michael Warner argues that publics are "a kind of fiction that has taken on life", a "cultural form" which meaning varies among and between contexts (Warner 2002: 8). Warner contends that publics form a social entity out of strangers by virtue of circulating discourse. According to the author, publics are "epiphenomenal": when addressed by people, publics become a sphere of conscious negotiation of struggles and conditions whereby people are

³¹ Signifying parallelism or repetition in discourse, that serve to construe "principles for action", exemplified by utterances such as "I don't like those"- "I don't either" (Lempert 2014: 184)

³² Hence, the sequence is similar to the concluding example in chapter one.

brought together. Thus, Warner notes, we must focus on the *making* of publics, by examining the “metapragmatic work” that publics engage in, while seeking answers to what is addressed, in what way and by whom. All these issues bear consequences for the “kind of social world to which we belong and for the kinds of actions and subjects that are possible in it” (Ibid: 12-13).

Dovetailing Warner’s inclination, Inka and Jasmin are aware of both being a part of, and how to contribute to, the making of a public, by virtue of relation and address. Hence, the sequence informs us about the kind of metapragmatic work being done. On (in)security, Inka and Jasmin frame their opinion on how the concept relates to people around them: they express affinity to both supervisors and helpers employed at the media workshop, as well as other d/Disabled coworkers.

The addressed audience(s) of the interaction are multiple. On one level of address, Inka and Jasmin are speaking to those whom the subject may concern: other d/Disabled people, and the Kivimedia crew. On another level of address, the Message is informative, addressed at hearers who are either unaware of d/Disability politics, or want to be better informed. Considering that Inka and Jasmin are speaking within and on behalf of Kivimedia, we can assume that Kivimedia as a public is concerned with communicating with both those inhabiting it, but also those “hearing” it. Both Messages are marking public-making. On the one hand, Kivimedia is a public platform where d/Disabled speakers co-engage with a/Able-bodied ones to create content. On the other hand, Kivimedia is a public that wants to inform the “other”, a/Able-bodied, listeners on topics related to d/Disability politics; to familiarize and normalize d/Disability to the hearer by inviting a d/Disabled gaze³³.

Importantly, Michael Warner notes that certain publics are defined by their tensions within and among other, larger publics, termed by Warner as “counterpublics”, which maintain, to at least some degree, a sense of their subordinate status (Warner 2002: 56). Counterpublics do not translate into subcultures, despite some similarities between the two. According to the author, a counterpublic works against the background of the public sphere, enabling “a horizon of opinion and exchange” and *can* have a questioning relation to power (Ibid: 57).

³³ Again, a scenario that indexes how Kivimedia creatively reproduces and mediates Lyhty’s political values.

Warner notes that the counterpublics' subordinate status is mostly hinged upon how participation in publics seems to form and transform the members' identities. Thus, identity and counterpublicity are mutually constitutive. Warner exemplifies this by pointing to sexuality: "homosexuals can exist in isolation, but gay people or queers exist by virtue of the world they elaborate together" (Ibid: 57-58). Therefore, according to the author, counterpublics are, by definition, shaped and transformed by their "conflict with the norms and contexts of their cultural environment, and this context of domination inevitably entails distortion" (Ibid: 62).

Following Warner, disability (physical, psychological, intellectual or congenital impairment) can exist in isolation, but d/Disability, the surface between the actual impairment and the cultural conception and negotiation of impairment, is elaborated through a notion of (un)belonging or engagement within a particular public. d/Disability can be defined as a counterpublic to an a/Able-public, while disability (impairment without the cultural negotiation of belonging) can be framed in isolation from this counterpublic, or even an extension of a medicalized public sphere itself.

When imagined as a counterpublic, d/Disability becomes, by definition, shaped by its conflict with the norms of its cultural environment. Hence, within an a/Able-public, ableist cultural norms that medicalizes certain bodies as able and others as disable consists of a relation of domination that entails, in Warner's words, distortion, indicating the misrepresentation of certain bodies in relation to others. Therefore, the scenario echoes Tanya Titchkosky's argument on how "bodies differ, sense-abilities differ, minds differ. All people possess these differences, but only some of these differences have been defined in terms of lack and limitation- disability" (Titchkosky 2001: 133). According to Titchkosky, an ableist prevention of the negotiation between pathology and normalcy denies the possibility that disability is perceived as a critical space where the dominance of the ideology of individualism can be interrogated for *all* people (Ibid: 138).

Such a view of d/Disability politics is seemingly a totalizing one and constitutes a similar setting as when reading the linguistic practice in Kivimedia as solely a violent regimentation of a/Able-fluent normalcy: miniscule "serious games" are never overdetermined by hegemonic ones. Kivimedia is an example of a creative resistance to seemingly totalizing ableist tendencies. In organizing itself by bringing together various tropes of political resistance and codifying itself

as a d/Disability counterpublic, Kivimedia becomes a political player: it provides a platform for d/Disabled people to voice political issues that they experience in their everyday lives, as exemplified by the interaction between Inka and Jasmin.

Therefore, Kivimedia organizes a counterpublic utilizing d/Disability as its assumed basis for counterpublicity. Explicitly, Kivimedia discursively circulates political narratives that become expanded and nuanced when they are filtered through the experiences of d/Disabled participants and d/Disability as a political status. Implicitly, Kivimedia enables d/Disabled persons to draw from narratives through which d/Disability is rendered values of competence, validity and belonging. This takes place in dialogue between d/Disabled and a/Able-bodied speakers: counterpublicity becomes emergent in interaction. To achieve a counterpublic that repositions d/Disability and resists ableist structures, Kivimedia necessarily aligns itself with other, sympathetic counterpublics that renders the productional context meaning and value.

Sympathetic Publics and the Discursive Circulation of Counterpublicity

Hence, we must consider the social conditions that are motivating Kivimedia. Francis Cody contends that the politics of publics takes the shape of cultural regulation of publicity. According to Cody, “the political subject of publicity is deeply entangled in the very technological, linguistic, and conceptual means of its own self-production” (Cody 2011: 47). In other words, the social and political conditions of publics are found in the technological, linguistic and conceptual means of their self-making.

Kivimedia’s broadcasts are produced at their offices in Helsinki and aired on both their Youtube stream and, later, their Mixcloud account. Some of the programs are broadcasted on Låhiradio, a Helsinki local radio station. Thus, the technological means hinges both on social media representation and a social contract between Lyhty and Låhiradio. On their home-site, Låhiradio notes that despite having a permission to run a profit-based operation, they have since the 90s been consciously organizing according to a non-profit perspective (kansanradioliitto/2020³⁴). Låhiradio has their own internal radio segments but primarily consists of many “guest-productions” paying Låhiradio to serve as a platform. Such contracts are the main source of income for Låhiradio. However, according to a Kivimedia spokesperson, the

³⁴ <http://www.kansanradioliitto.fi/>

same does not apply for them. He described the contract between Låhiradio and Kivimedia as a “win-win situation”; Låhiradio desires diversity (*monumuotoisuutta*), a feature that Kivimedia provides for them. Hence, no payments are made between the two, although the contract supposedly affects which programs are selected to be aired on Låhiradio. Both the regular and irregular shows on Låhiradio are all music-oriented, with little to no dialogue. The spokesperson described Miikan Punksuosikit, the most prevalent show on Låhiradio, as being the one “with a clear, crystallized structure”, indicating that certain requirements are made on the content that Kivimedia produces³⁵.

The linguistic means of Kivimedia’s public-making, despite signifying a reproduction of an ableist linguistic ideology, is mainly focused on a cooperative project between d/Disabled and a/Able talkers. A cohesive We is codified by a collective guidance of the speech events, a shared establishment of footing according to a common normative horizon. Granted, a/Able-bodied helpers and supervisors oversee and gloss over the d/Disabled language that is spoken on air, but rather than being overtly violent, the stratification takes place to allow as many as possible to partake in the collaboration that is constituted in Kivimedia.

The conceptual means by which Kivimedia reproduces a public can be examined by following the discursive elements that are being circulated. An interesting point to analyze are the various interlocutory speech acts that are spoken often at the start and the end of each episode or between various segments. Usually, these speech acts are uttered by guests, but occasionally by Kivimedia staff, both a/Abled and d/Disabled speakers. There are a handful of examples that circulate often, even several times per episode. One of them is worth highlighting because it mediates metapragmatic information, indexing the political framework engaged by Kivimedia. The sequence consists of a dialogue between two d/Disabled members of the media workshop³⁶ and one a/Able-bodied helper³⁷:

³⁵ Here, an argument on the intertextual gaps that are manipulated, what registers and genres are prioritized, could be made. However, this is not the focus of my analysis at this point. Shortly, the inclusion of music-oriented programs rather than dialogue-based ones shows that Låhiradio prefers quite conventional broadcasts despite desiring diversity.

³⁶ One of them is Marko Koivu- a regular co-host of Kiviperjantai episodes and the host of “Marko Koivun peliohjelman” (*Marko Koivu’s gameshow*), in which Marko reviews various computer and console games. The other d/Disabled speaker is not referred to by name.

³⁷ Who also is not referred to by name.

Marko: “Hän on siviilipalvelus... sivari”

[Marko: “He’s a civil... sivari (a slang term used to designate civil servants- those who choose not to attend the military)”]

Person 2: “Sitä ei saa, Marko, sitä ei saa sanoa”

[Person 2: “You can’t... Marko, you can’t say that word”]

Marko: “Aa!”

[Marko: “Aa!”]

Person 3: “Kiitoksia tästä lämpimästä terve tulosta, ja vaikka käytätte kiellettyä sanaa se ei minua haittaa koska kannan tätä siviilipalvelusmiehen titteliä oikein kovalla ylpeydellä.”

[Person 3: “Thanks for such as warm welcome, and despite you using a forbidden word, I’m not offended, because I carry the title of a civil servant with pride.”]

We are informed that Kivimedia³⁸ is an organization where young adults undergo their civil service. In Finland, all 18-year-old males³⁹ are required to either attend the military or commit to being a civil servant for a year. I do not give a detailed account of the politics related to this issue (the question of the degree of militarization is a hot potato in Finnish society, always have been and always will be). However, it is noteworthy that stereotypically those choosing not to attend military service (which is doable in a minimum of 6 months), but rather undertake the 12-month civil service, do so because of political morals. This a generalized and vague perception (people have various reasons to choose civil service) but holds some truth to it. Interestingly, in the sequence, the slang-term for a civil servant, “sivari” (for which there is no English equivalent), is framed as potentially offensive. It alone marks the interaction as a political issue: the person who is called “sivari” and is doing civil service in Kivimedia, is positioned as one who needs to defend their pride in being a civil servant.

This framing informs us about Kivimedia’s political alignment. As stated, stereotypical perceptions identify a civil servant as politically critical of the military, a figure who wants to contribute to society utilizing political awareness for other means and ends. Despite the number

³⁸ And, by extension, Lyhty.

³⁹ For women and non-binary persons, the enrolment is optional.

of civil servants being on a steady rise the last decades, still, civil service is seen as contradicting the common-sensical social path among male citizens in Finland. The image of the civil servant is imbued by political values and cultural signification, indexing someone engaging in civil activism, giving the sequence, and its inclusion in several Kivimedia episodes, a particular political and narrational value. Kivimedia as a d/Disability counterpublic aligns with both a discursive and a physical circulation of civil activism, typifying a form counter-politics⁴⁰ imbued by political indexicality, a trope of grassroots activism⁴¹.

A similar indexicality and alignment is established when examining, for example, “Miikan Punksuosikit” (*Miika’s Punkfavourites*). Admittedly, the segment’s name reveals both the discursive and political elements that are circulated. Punk is historically and politically a distinct cultural movement saturated by certain meanings and values. These are best encapsulated by the host Miika’s utterance in an interview with a member of *Kynnet*, a Finnish punk band, in which the two engage in a general discussion on the current Finnish punk-scene, that according to both is alive and well. Miika states “Punk on mullekin elämäntapa ja ei mua säännöt kiinnosta” (*Punk for me as well is a form of life, and rules does not interest me*). Considering that the segment (the only radio-program in Finland solely dedicated to punk music) is one of Kivimedia’s regular shows on Lähiradio, aligns the project with a particular kind of political address. The hearer is informed by an activist-sympathetic speaker context, that addresses a critical subcultural trope of politics, and establishes a footing with an “underground” political narrative, emphasized by the intimate relationships to the punk scene⁴².

Further, an additional alignment that Kivimedia manifests with a surrounding political and cultural project is its comprehensive relationship with the Finnish rap-scene. Many of the mentioned interlocutory speech acts at the beginning, end or between segments, are made by rap-musicians, such as Adikia and Edu Kehäkettunen. Also, one d/Disabled member in Kivimedia

⁴⁰ Here, other examples, such as “Otson Vastauutiset” (*Otso’s Counter News*), a program on alternative, activist news, can be pointed at.

⁴¹ In what degree the trope of civil activism is an organizational pillar in Lyhty, remains unclear. However, given that overlaps between Kivimedia’s stance-taking and Lyhty’s political values are prevalent, one can assume that civil activism is a motivational factor in Lyhty’s activities.

⁴² The relationship between Kivimedia and punk goes beyond Miikan Punksuosikit. *Pertti Kurikan Nimipäivät*, a former d/Disabled punk band that represented Finland in the Eurovision Song Contest in 2015, was formed at Kivimedia.

protrudes this relationship. Kalle Havumäki, or Mc Koo, has achieved national attention for being a d/Disabled rapper.

Stereotypically, the Finnish rap-scene is linked with an anti-racist, leftist-activist trope of political awareness. Spokespersons for Finnish rap-music, such as Paleface, are known for both rapping critically and acting politically against hate speech, racism, and sexism. The relationship between the rap-scene and leftist political activism has become vague during the 2010s (see Ramstedt and Rantakallio 2020). Still, I contend that the tight-knit relationship marked between Kivimedia and Finnish rap and the circulation of discursive rap elements renders the Kivimedia counterpublic a narrative consisting of anti-racist, anti-nationalist and anti-sexist tropes.

All these alignments construct a counterpublic that represents and circulates a mix of discursive narratives of political contestation, imbued by significations that draw linkages with Kivimedia and other activist counterpublicities. In other words, Kivimedia aligns with sympathetic political frameworks that allow an interdiscursive resistance to processes of normativity. However, Kivimedia is also an independent counterpublic. It mixes tropes of counterhegemony with narratives of d/Disabledness; d/Disability becomes a vector through which punk and rap discourses garner a unique expression. d/Disability as a relationality becomes the motivating core of the political project that is taking place in Kivimedia. Hence, the technological, linguistic and conceptual means of Kivimedia's self-production allows it to comment on a changing cultural landscape in a distinctive manner. It brings together fractions that are typically imbued by an a/Able gaze and reconstitutes them by inviting a d/Disabled counter gaze. Therefore, interactionally, Kivimedia achieves the political endeavor of Lyhty, by creatively centralizing d/Disability as the marker of its functionality⁴³. The last section of this chapter clarifies how Kivimedia contributes to the resistance of an ableist hegemony and enables d/Disabled speakers' negotiation of sociopolitical agency outside the realm of violent normativity.

Kivimedia and the Making of a Counterpublic

As stated, Kivimedia as a social project is inherently imbued by politics: the construction of a platform where d/Disabled people are encouraged to speak to an a/Able-bodied audience is,

⁴³ In the introduction, I presented the political goals of Lyhty.

by definition, a political enterprise. The following sequence sheds light on Kivimedia's political contestation. The segment is part of a "Kiviperjantai" (*Kivi Friday*) episode that is aired on Lähiradio, in addition to Kivimedia's own Youtube stream, during the national media education week⁴⁴. Hence, all speech is addressed to a broader public, that can be assumed to consist largely of a/Abled hearers (even *the* public).

One song that is played during the Levyraati (*Record Panel*) episode is of analytical interest. The songs included in Levyraati are often predominantly "popular" music⁴⁵ (both classics and contemporary music; different genres). However, occasionally, a song that has been produced at Kivimedia's music workshop is included in the segment. Here, similarly to their media workshop, d/Disabled persons are aided in music-making by professional musicians. Some overlap between the workshops is evident: frequently, the panelists in Levyraati are participants in the music workshop. The song in question is performed by Joni Elonen, a member of both the media and the music workshop, and part-time artist. Before exploring the song, let us consider the preceding discussion that contextualizes the making of the song to the hearer:

Onni: Teemme tässä tuollaista pohjatyötä yhden toimittajakollegamme kanssa, hänen nimensä on Joni Elonen. Ja Joni Elonen on tällä kertaa valinnut kolme Levyraati kappaletta, ja hän on myös valinnut yhden kappaleen jossa hän itse laulaa, joka on jonkinlainen coveri Paula Vesalan "Älä tuu droppaa mun tunnelmaa". Mutta tuota jotta pysymme selvillä mistä on kysymys, niin kuunnellaan mitä Joni Elonen oikein on mieltä tästä kappaleesta joka tässä sitten soitetaan.

[Onni: We have done some research with our reporter colleague; his name is Joni Elonen. And Joni Elonen has this time chosen three Levyraati songs, he has even chosen one song in which he himself sings, it is some sort of cover of Paula Vesala's "Älä tuu droppaa mun tunnelmaa". In order to clarify, let's listen to what Joni Elonen has to say about the song that we will hear soon.]

Sami: Joo kuunnellaan.

[Sami: Sure, let's listen.]

Onni: Noniin, täällä siis meillä tämän kertaisen Levyraadin erikoismies, joka on valinnut musiikkia kolme kappaletta Kiviperjantain Levyraatiin, hän on Joni Elonen, myöskin artistina

⁴⁴ The same episode that was used to exemplify recasting in chapter one.

⁴⁵ Whatever that means- a discussion outside the scope of this essay.

tunnettu. Mutta tuota Joni sä olet valinnut kolme kappaletta ja ensimmäinen valinta, haluatko kertoa mikä se on ja miksi valitsit sen?

[Onni: So, here we have the Levyraati specialty-guy (*erikoismies*), who chose three songs for Kiviperjantai's Levyraati episode, his name is Joni Elonen, also known as an artist. Well Joni, you have chosen three songs, and the first choice, do you want to tell what it is and why you chose it?]

Joni: Joo. Siksi koska mun huoneeseen tuli kerran. Siivooja Teo Virtanen. Ja kysy näin että jos saisi tulla moppaamaan.

[Joni: Yes. Because one time. A cleaner, Teo Virtanen, entered my room. And he asked whether he could mop my floor.]

Onni: Mitä sanoit?

[Onni: What did you reply?]

Joni: Josta me sitten Paden kaa keksittiin. Kun se alkuperäinen versio, "Älä tuu droppaamaan" soi samaan aikaan. Tuli radiosta niin. Siitä sitten keksittiin tää "Älä tuu moppaamaan".

[Joni: Well, we then figured with Pade. The original song, "Älä tuu droppaa" (Don't drop) was playing at the same time. From the radio. So, we figured that "Älä tuu moppaamaan" (Don't mop).]

Onni: Eli silloin sä halusit tehdä tällaisen version Paula Vesalan "Älä tuu droppaa mun tunnelmaa" biisistä, "Älä tuu moppaa mun lattiaa"?

Onni: In other words, you then wanted to make this kind of a cover version of Paula Vesala's "Älä tuu droppaa mun tunnelmaa" (Don't drop my vibe), that is, "Älä tuu moppaa mun lattiaa" (don't mop my floor)?

Joni: Niin.

[Joni: Exactly.]

I included this sequence for two reasons. Firstly, to attribute the marking of an addressivity structure, the utterance "toimittajakollegamme" (*our reporter colleague*) made by Onni is curious. By framing Joni as one among many reporters, Onni is presenting Kivimedia as a cohesive unit, consisting of both d/Disabled and a/Able-bodied reporters. "Our colleague" indexes a grouping. Onni positions a/Able-bodied reporters, himself included, as equals to

d/Disabled ones; both an important and respectable statement that marks the speaking We within the counterpublic, despite being somewhat deceptive.

The problem, which lies in a discussion I return to both in chapter three and in the coda, but that I must briefly allude to, relates to the social condition of Kivimedia as a site where lines between the d/Disabled broadcasters engaging in the media workshop, and the a/Able-bodied professionals employed as advisors, are veiled. There lies a dubious issue in intentionally positioning the d/Disabled and a/Able-bodied broadcasters as one and the same. The complication emerges from the fact that the a/Able-bodied advisors receive a proper wage, while d/Disabled broadcasters are not engaging in wage labor, but rather, get a sort of monthly allowance for their participation in the workshop. The issue is not one that Kivimedia is responsible for. Rather, it relates to the broader discussion of employment among d/Disabled people in Finland; the political reasons for, and consequences of, framing an occupation as work when from a socio-financial perspective it is not defined as such. Thus, despite indexing a collaborative grouping, an ambiguity permeates the utterance “our colleague”; a discrepancy that emerges when considering the political implications of d/Disabled work vis-à-vis a/Abled work⁴⁶. This notion adds to the ambivalence between an ableist power reproduction and a collaborative effort of changing the status quo. Not everything can be done at once.

Secondly, I included the sequence to foreground the d/Disability issue that Kivimedia wants to address to a broader, a/Able public. We are informed that Joni’s situation consists of four variables, which are constitutive of the relationships and spaces that mediate a d/Disabled experience. Firstly, Joni lives in a group-home, where he has his own room (a cleaner...entered *my* room). Secondly, he is surrounded by personnel who help with cleaning, among other things (*a cleaner...* Teo Virtanen). Thirdly, he has a personal assistant or helper at his disposal (Pade), who engages in the music workshop together with Joni, considering that the idea to produce the song was made in unison with Pade⁴⁷ (... *we* then figured *with* Pade). Finally, the media

⁴⁶ Here, the ambiguity can also be read as a consequence of Onni’s reference to the term “colleague”. The term could index both the cooperative engagement in the media workshop, but also the loosely defined co-profession of being a “reporter”, an employment category that inhabits various tasks, statuses and professions. Which utilization of “colleague” Onni is referring to, “workshopper” or “reporter”, remains unclear. However, I understand his statement as signalling both usages, given that d/Disabled members are temporarily engaging in dual identification, a reasoning that will become clearer in the next chapter (the opening example of Jari).

⁴⁷ This could not be the case, too, Pade might be a helper outside the workshop or a staff at the group-home.

workshop is the place where Joni spends his days at, his “workplace”. Here he encounters both other d/Disabled persons and a/Able-bodied ones, such as Onni, who is interviewing him.

Joni’s social environment, as described in the exchange with Onni, is a common one for the d/Disabled in Finland. Often, d/Disabled persons live in group homes, leave for “work” during the days (*exemplary employment*, “päivätoiminta” and “daglig verksamhet” in Finnish and Swedish), are surrounded by personnel, and have a personal assistant at their (often limited) disposal. Hence, the inclusion of the interview in the segment preceding the song, can be read as strategic addressivity or recipient design. Remember, the episode is aimed at an a/Able-hearing public. The inclusion of Joni’s social environment speaks to Kivimedia’s designed address; they want to inform the hearer about Joni’s d/Disabled experience. Kivimedia as a counterpublic becomes marked through various mechanisms. One mechanism is an informational axis of address, aimed at an outsider, a/Able public; the imagined audience being someone who wants to learn about d/Disabled realities. The dialogue between Joni and Onni, as well as the inclusion of Joni’s song in the Levyraati segment, adds to that addressivity structure.

Now, the lyrics for the “Älä tuu moppaa mun lattiaa”⁴⁸:

Verse 1: Kun unesta heräsin mä tänään. Mun ovea koputti joku jäbä. Kysy multa saisko tulla moppaa. Ja siitä vasta syntyikin soppa. Mä huusin vaan: mua verottaa. Mopit hiteen, sä et niitä tänne tuo. Laskeen viiteen, kotirauhan mulle suot.

[Verse 1: When I woke up today. Some dude knocked on my door. He asked, can I mop your floor? And that started a quarrel. I screamed: that burdens me! Take away all the mops, don’t bring them here. I’ll count to five, home peace you shall give me.]

Chorus: Älä tuu siihen moppaa mun lattiaa, miks ihmeessä huonetta siivotaan? Voitko mennä muualle siitä siivoamaan? Lalalaala. Älä tuu moppaa mun lattiaa.

[Chorus: Please do not mop my floor, why does my room even have to be cleaned? Can you go somewhere else and clean? Lalalaala. Please do not mop my floor.]

⁴⁸ The song can be heard on the Kiviperjantai episode which aired on 14.2.2020, approximately 1 hour and 12 minutes into the broadcast. Those who understand Finnish, I implore you to listen to it, the song is both fun and socio-politically interesting, the reasons for which I shall elaborate.

Verse 2: Mult alkoi mennä hermot. Nyt sä jätkä saatana kerrot. Miksi ihmeessä käytät imuria, alanko potkia kohti sun nivusias? Se voisi olla aika kivuliast. Mopit hiteen, sä et niitä tänne tuo. Lasken viiteen, kotirauhan mulle suot.

[Verse 2: I started to lose my nerve. Shit dude, tell me. Why do you even use a Hoover, should I give you a kick in the crotch-area? That could hurt. Take away all the mops, don't bring them here. I'll count to five, home peace you shall give me.]

Chorus: Älä tuu siihen moppaa mun lattiaa, miks ihmeessä huonetta siivotaan? Voitko mennä muualle siitä siivoamaan? Lalalalaala. Älä tuu moppaa mun lattiaa.

[Chorus: Please do not mop my floor, why does my room even have to be cleaned? Can you go somewhere else and clean? Lalalalaala. Please do not mop my floor.]

Kivimedia seems to insinuate a political complication by including this song in an episode that is aimed at an a/Able-bodied public audience. It touches upon public-private issues that are uniquely experienced by d/Disabled persons, raising questions regarding what Kivimedia “is up to by the means of it”⁴⁹. It appears as a critical comment aimed at an ableist public sphere. In verse one, Joni notes that one day he awoke to someone knocking on his door. This person (apparently a worker/cleaner named Teo) wanted to mop his floor. Right away, Joni replies with a sense of irritation and frustration: it burdens him that someone wants to mop his floor first thing in the morning. The situation continues by Joni asking the cleaner to go away; he even questions the idea of cleaning one’s room in the first place. He indicates that it is not acceptable to enter his room whenever; he rather keeps the door shut, opened at his will.

The issue of d/Disabled private-public dichotomization is something that Don Kulick and Jens Rydström elaborate in their investigation of d/Disabled sexuality. The authors note that the private sphere is both “a significant vector of oppression and a necessary site of redress and progressive change” (Kulick and Rydström 2015: 22). According to the authors, an ideological discrepancy permeates the difference between the “unnatural, but public” sexuality of d/Disabled persons and “natural, but private” sexuality of personnel. Importantly, Kulick and Rydström contend that d/Disabled sexuality is public, only *because they have seemingly no privacy* (Ibid: 81: my emphasis).

⁴⁹ A consideration that is indicative, according to Michael Lempert, of the addressivity structure in question (exemplified in chapter one).

Despite demonstrating a subject-matter that is not developed in this essay, Kulick and Rydström touches upon d/Disability politics that Joni Elonen's song indexes: the issue of the private-public dichotomy in a context where privacy is borderline non-existent. Joni expresses distress to someone entering his room on an unsuitable occasion. The institutionally enforced public erosion of d/Disabled persons' privacy becomes manifested in the mop that exists in the hands of the cleaner, who in the sequence embodies the institution designed to help Joni. The mop becomes indicative of Joni's sense of agency, or lack thereof, in a situation which is common, if not omnipresent, for the d/Disabled in Finland. Interestingly, when no other action is available for Joni, what does he do? He expresses a desire that Teo-the-cleaner should leave, and he questions the whole notion of cleaning in the first place: he *resists*.

According to the Sherry Ortner, cultural "serious games"⁵⁰ are built upon "power relations at a micro-level". Ortner notes, because of clashes, contradictions and the ever-present possibility for contingency, subalterns are always playing "games of their own" within seemingly dominant ones. Hence, they are never drained of agency (Ortner 2006: 150). Despite being embedded into a web of risk-of-intentionality, I raise Ortner's point because there is a telling game-at-play in Joni's situation. In the microcosm of his bedroom, agency, resistance, hegemony and creativity become entangled and compressed; his bedroom becomes the context where compulsory a/Able-bodiedness is criticized.

The criticism is typified as textual and practical, both of which are analytically relevant in terms of d/Disability politics. Textually, Joni is imploring the cleaner Teo to take a hike. He indicates that kicking the cleaner in the crotch area could potentially be very painful for the latter. The formulation is a violent one; in a sense, Joni engages in counterviolence to an already violent situation, as imagined from the perspective of d/Disabled experience. Joni is extremely frustrated with the situation: he literally wants to kick the cleaner, the embodiment of an ableist institution, between the legs. Also, with the song, Joni is eloquently drawing pop-cultural linkages to the feeling of getting-ones-vibe-killed by annoying, external actors (Vesala's "Älä tuu droppaa mun tunnelmaa" is a song that fundamentally tells people who-are-killing-my-vibe to beat it).

⁵⁰ Social play of cultural goals revolving around relations of power.

Practically, the inclusion of the song in the Levyraati episode informs two additional factors. Firstly, that the song has been produced, assumedly on Joni's wish⁵¹, signals that Kivimedia's music and media workshops function on some level as a platform for d/Disabled people to express their competencies. Kivimedia provides a surface on which Joni is enabled, even encouraged, to vent his frustration. In doing so, Kivimedia establishes a framework from which d/Disabled speakers can draw from when negotiating their lived experiences, and importantly, "play games of their own"⁵².

Secondly, given that the song is included in a segment aired on Låhiraudio, the sequence underlines how Kivimedia as a counterpublic provides a framework of agency for d/Disabled people to criticize a/Able-bodied normativity. Think about it: Joni gets exasperated by someone wanting to enter his room and mop the floor under his feet, reflecting a situation of the "public" infiltrating his "privacy" (as Kulick and Rydström noted, d/Disabled privacy is often very public). And what happens? He attends Kivimedia's music workshop where he is aided in putting his feelings into words. He is assured in a dialogue with other d/Disabled members and a/Able-bodied helpers that there is value in his experience. The song is produced and aired on an episode that is aimed at a broad, generically defined a/Able public. In other words, Joni and the Kivimedia crew completely overhauls the private-public situation and turns it up and down. Kivimedia allows Joni to infiltrate *the* public with *his* privacy- *he makes the private political*- rather than the other way around.

Therefore, we are informed by two phenomena. Firstly, Joni's song and its inclusion in the Levyraati segment marks a mediation of d/Disability politics, enlightening the hearer about the privacy-paradox as experienced by d/Disabled persons. Hence, Kivimedia publicly communicates that which privately is the political complication felt by d/Disabled people within the public that is addressed. A compelling example of how a counterpublic taps into the circulation of political discourse in framing the social and material contestations affecting its members. Hence, the scenario reminds us about Warner's notion of publics being self-organizing discourse, existing by virtue of being addressed (by itself). Here, the private-public dichotomy as

⁵¹ In the dialogue with Onni, Joni tells us that he and Pade figured together that they should make a song about the situation. Onni then iterates "...and then *you wanted* to make...", signifying that the song was produced at Joni's behest.

⁵² Reminding us how Lyhty and Kivimedia are successful "enablers" of a d/Disabled gaze.

experienced by d/Disabled becomes, in addition to being a practical and political situation, a form of discursive circulation: a narrational element that becomes entextualized⁵³ in the form of a song which itself is a spin on a pop-culture phenomenon. Human rights issues and public tropes of humor and dance-music become intrinsically enmeshed.

The rather complex but enthralling ambivalence that such a clash-of-discourses constitutes is exhibited by the reactions that the panelists embody in relation to the song: everyone laughs and finds it extremely funny, and most of all, everyone identifies with the song. In other words, all the panelists can find themselves in the situation experienced by Joni. The sequence is familiar to all and the urge to say please-go-away and the desire to give a hefty kick in-the-crotch-area to the perpetrators is a mutual feeling. As a social performance the song resignifies something that is collectively felt. In an unrelated ethnographic situation, Stavroula Pipyrou argues that social actors in a conflict-ridden South Italian context use a trope of irony to express concerns about the consequences of economic turmoil. Irony becomes the vector through which much greater fears and anxieties are communicated, constructing the narrational framework that actors draw from when communicating the precariousness of their felt reality (Pipyrou 2014: 534-535). By no means are the experiences felt by d/Disabled people in Kivimedia and the social actors in Southern Italy necessarily connected, but this veil of irony and humor serving as a narrational framework when anxieties are expressed is an intriguing factor to consider in the example we have discussed.

Secondly, the productional context of Joni's song exemplifies how Kivimedia, in indexing issues as experienced by d/Disabled people when speech is aimed at an a/Able-hearing context, is aligning with a political critique. The Kivimedia counterpublic seeks to criticize the hegemonic a/Able public, within which it partly exists but is also internally opposed to. Through Joni's song, Kivimedia utilizes Låhiradio as a platform for voicing a critical comment towards a/Able-bodied hegemony and provides a political space where d/Disabled identities can be elaborated.

Hence, Kivimedia attributes a framework from which d/Disabled speakers can draw from to negotiate their existence outside of a violent ableist social reproduction that seeks to rigidly

⁵³ The process of decontextualization (extracting from one discourse) and recontextualization (inserting to another discourse).

marginalize them at the outskirts of ableist institutions. This scenario enables both Kivimedia as a collective, and those d/Disabled and a/Able-bodied persons who participate in the collective, to “Crip” culture: they reveal and potentially transform the material positionalities of d/Disabled people within a system of compulsory a/Able-bodiedness. In Joni’s example, the material conditions of his social environment are revealed. In the preceding interview and in the song lyrics he sheds light on the restrictive policing he faces in his private life as a d/Disabled citizen in an ableist society. He also engages in transformative action; other d/Disabled persons, in this case the panelists, find comfort and comradeship in his song. For them, it is forceful that somebody voices their collectively felt agony. The next chapter expands this argument and underlines how d/Disabled people are restricted and governed within an ableist spatial-temporal matrix, and how Kivimedia allows them to resist such forces. I interrogate both the production of, and resistance to, ableism as an interactional achievement.

Kivimedia and the Criping of Culture

In chapter two I argued that Kivimedia functions as a counterpublic against the backdrop of an ableist public sphere. At best, Kivimedia enables d/Disabled speakers to negotiate belonging and agency, by allowing them to engage in public-making that aligns with forms of political contestation and questions the ableist social reproduction. In doing so, d/Disabled speakers reveal their material positionalities within an ableist society.

In order to nuance the argument, and to understand how Kivimedia and its positioning of d/Disability “Crips” culture, I want to highlight an episode of “Jari Nordström Haastattelee” (*Jari Nordström Interviews*), a segment where the reporter Jari interviews various guests. Often, the guests are ones who have visited either Kivimedia or some other workshop at Lyhty. However, every so often Jari visits various events or happenings, such as in the following sequence, in which Jari attends the opening night of a light installation by the artist Reija Pasanen. The artist has together with the d/Disabled residents of a group-home in Helsinki co-produced a light show in the apartment building where the home is situated. The opening extract is a closing remark by Reija. It is followed by the ending sequence of Jari’s interview with Pertti Hänninen, the musician who has performed at the opening of the light show:

Reija: Kiitos kaikille jotka osallistuivat tähän teokseen ja sisällön tuottamiseen, sillä se nimittäin ei oo mikään helppo homma! (laughter)

[Reija: Thanks to everybody who participated in this installation and in the production of content, that’s no easy task! (laughter)]

...

Jari: Sanopa Pertti jotain.

[Jari: Pertti, say something.]

Pertti: No mitäs mä nyt sanoisin...

[Pertti: What should I say...]

Jari: Lopuksi, tästä.

[Jari: Lastly, here.]

Pertti: No, sanon sen että musta on ihan mahtavaa että tällaisia juttuja järjestetään, mitä tänä iltana, ja olen tosi kiitollinen että pääsin tänne soittamaan.

[Pertti: Well, I'll say that I think it's really great that things like this are organized, as this evening, and I'm really grateful that I got to play here.]

Jari: Eikö tätä ole kertaakaan järjestetty kerrostalossa tällaisista tapahtumaa?

[Jari: Has no-one organized anything like this event before in an apartment building?]

Pertti: No en mä tällaista ite oo nähnyt ainakaan, En oo koskaan, tää oli ensimmäinen kerta ja tääl on hieno tunnelma, ja kivat asukkaat.

[Pertti: At least I have not seen anything like this. I have never, this was the first time and there's a great atmosphere, and nice residents.]

Jari: No mites Pertin kanssa voitais päättää tämä nauhoitus... ääni, äänite tähän että mitäs Pertti haluaa kertoa lopuksi?

[Jari: Well, how could we end this recording with Pertti... Sound, sound recording, so what would Pertti want to tell us in conclusion?]

Pertti: Lopuksi haluan kiittää kaikkia asukkaita ja Stefania siitä että sain tulla tänne soittamaan.

[Pertti: In conclusion I want to thank all the residents and Stefan for allowing me to play here.]

Jari: Kiitoksia.

[Jari: Thank you.]

Pertti: Kiitän.

[Pertti: Thanks.]

Pertti: Mahtava haastattelu, tosi hyvä! Se on hienoa että sä teet tommoista!

[Pertti: What a great interview, really good! It's so great that you do such a thing!]

Jari: Mutta tää on mun työ, kato!

[Jari: But look, this is my job!]

Pertti: Niin!

[Pertti: Yeah!]

From the extract, political issues that are typical for d/Disabled people become evident. The remark made by Reija, the artist, concludes her interview: she thanks everybody involved, and underlines how the work all participants have put in was “no easy task”. Given that her utterance is accompanied by a light chuckle, the remark signifies the cultural (and often involuntary) infantilization of d/Disabled people. Don Kulick and Jens Rydström argue that d/Disability has historically been associated with a narrative of helplessness. In social reproduction, the d/Disabled have been clustered together with other “helpless” agents, such as children (Kulick and Ryström 2015: 4). In framing the task as “not an easy one”, addressed explicitly to Jari and implicitly to all collaborators in the light show, Reija resembles a teacher congratulating their students on the performance of a difficult task, or a parent who applauds their children for doing something extraordinary.

A similar signification is visible in the latter excerpt. Between Jari and Pertti, the trope of congratulating d/Disabled performance and the consequential, involuntary, infantilization of d/Disability is not aimed at the artists, but rather at Jari. Pertti, in an “off-record” utterance (conclusionary remarks have been given twice, and the sound quality of the recording gets a bit blurrier, indicating that the microphones are either being moved or reached for in order to turn them off), states that “What a great interview, really good! It’s so great that you do such a thing!” (*Mahtava haastattelu, tosi hyvä! Se on hienoa että sä teet tommoista!*). Again, the remark resembles a typical, relatively infantilizing compliment given to someone who performs something unexpected⁵⁴.

Pertti’s compliment constitutes an interesting scenario: in praising Jari in an overt fashion after an interview which in its shape and form is quite a “normal one”⁵⁵, Pertti’s utterance is signaling either a genuine surprise at Jari’s level of competence, or an understanding of the situation as being one where he is supposed to overemphasize Jari’s competence. Both motivations are analytically interesting. The first motivation indicates that Pertti has never met a d/Disabled person who excels at something he categorizes as a task stereotypically linked with an a/Abled body. The scenario indexes that d/Disabled people’s capabilities are kept at the

⁵⁴ This becomes increasingly evident when listening to the tone of Pertti’s voice, which seems overly enthusiastic. He resembles a parent congratulating their child, something that probably comes quite naturally to him given that he mentions him being the father of two young children.

⁵⁵ Basic questioning on Pertti’s motivations to make music and so on.

outskirts of societal knowledge production and that they lack a social and cultural platform where their competencies are visible for an a/Able-bodied public. Correspondingly, Tanya Titchkosky (2001) remarks that a fundamental problem with ableism is that a/Able-bodied people can live a whole lifetime without encountering d/Disabled individuals, because they remain at the margins of social reproduction.

The second motivation indexes not genuine astonishment, but rather a sense of urgency to congratulate something that Pertti experiences as abnormal: he finds it out of the ordinary that d/Disabled people can perform tasks stereotypically associated with a/Abled bodies, such as reporting. Either way, the situation manifests a predicament, and seems unintentional on Pertti's part.

In this short sequence, two tropes of resistance become discernible. First, an expectation of normativity is produced, but right away contested by Jari. The expectation indicates that it is *not* normal for a d/Disabled person to do reporting: the normal is that an a/Able body is performing the task. Thus, Jari's response to Pertti's perplexity is fascinating. He utters "But look, this is my job!" (*Mutta tää on mun työ, kato!*), a response that weaves together many layers of creative contestation. Jari deems the situation, where he as a d/Disabled person is engaging in a task stereotypically categorized as an a/Able-bodied one, as completely normal. He perceives Pertti's astonishment and covert conception of normativity as the bizarreness in the situation. In a sense, he construes an independent conception of normativity, one where d/Disabled people are equally equipped to perform tasks, such as reporting, as a/Abled people. Within this framework, the common-sense identifies the d/Disabled person to be capable and innovative. Thus, Jari is seemingly drawing from a narrative of competence in his resistance, in a similar way as the wheelchair basketball players in Molly Bloom's ethnography (Bloom 2019).

A second trope of resistance is related to the concept of work. Pertti's surprise at Jari being good at journalistic reporting, indicates that in Pertti's understanding d/Disabled individuals are not generally employed as such, a fact that rings true in the Finnish society. In Finland, d/Disabled people endure a precarious situation on the labor market, seldomly having opportunities to choose between employment or getting adequate monetary compensation for the work they perform. Often, d/Disabled people do not receive a proper contract of employment, and if they do, they belong to the group of d/Disabled who are aware of their cultural and

political situation and are able to make claims for their cause. Most d/Disabled people are “employed” at various day centers (*exemplary employment*) where they perform relatively simple and monotonous tasks for which they are compensated with a daily allowance (varies around 5-10 euros per day), rather than a proper wage⁵⁶. The entrance to the wage labor market has historically been restricted for d/Disabled people, and still is today.

However, Jari’s inclination “this is my job”, complicates the matter. Jari is employed at Lyhty to partake in Kivimedia, and he assumedly receives a daily allowance rather than a proper wage for his input at the workshop. That said, Jari’s perception of it being completely normal for a d/Disabled person to be as equally competent as an a/Abled person, is accompanied by an understanding that it is also normal for him to *be* a reporter: he identifies both as a reporter and as a d/Disabled workshop member⁵⁷. Jari finds it uncanny that Pertti is categorizing his reporting as something congratulatory: surely, he is good at it because *it is his job*⁵⁸.

The sequence is an example of Criping, as developed by Robert McRuer, and elaborated by Kulick and Rydström among others. According to the authors, d/Disabled people “crip culture” in the sense that they demonstrate how “compulsory able-bodiedness that stigmatizes them is a nimbus of power that defines and regiments identities, relationships, social structures, and cultural hierarchies of value” (Kulick and Rydström 2015: 14). Like queer theory, Crip theory provides a tool to investigate the institutionalized, dominant forms of ableist social reproduction and processes of normativity. Hence, Jari’s response “But look, this is my job” to Pertti’s astonishment demonstrates and counteracts the nimbus of power that regiments him as a certain kind of person, one that lacks competencies to engage in the given task and is positioned as belonging to a specific network of relationships.

d/Disabled people are stereotypically trapped in a temporal and spatial matrix: they are categorized as a cultural monolith; they have only restricted access to certain parts of the society and their identities are systematically identified as belonging to peripheral spheres of social

⁵⁶ More on this discussion, see the Coda.

⁵⁷ Often, he addresses himself as “toimittaja” Jari Nordström- *reporter* Jari Nordström

⁵⁸ Here, as in the discussion in chapter two on Onni’s identification of Joni as “our colleague”, we can read the situation as dual identification on Jari’s behalf. Either he determines himself as being a professional reporter, which raises questions about the ambiguities permeating the definition of “reporting” as an employment (who can identify as a reporter and who cannot). Alternatively, he categorises his participation in the media workshop as a form of official employment, a source for professional “reporting”, which in its turn raises questions about the ambiguities of categorizing d/Disabled day-activities as an employment.

reproduction. Therefore, projects like Kivimedia becomes categorically necessary. Kivimedia, by constructing a d/Disability counterpublic, enables its members, such as Jari, to make claims on their identities by drawing from frameworks which are not overdetermined by an ableist axis of power. Hence, Kivimedia allows Jari to Crip culture: by drawing from narratives of competence and of employment, Jari makes the surrounding ableist culture visible; a culture that does not extend these attributes to him automatically.

The reminder of this chapter expands the argument on how Kivimedia enables d/Disabled persons to Crip culture, and uncovers how the process is best perceived as a form of interactional achievement. Firstly, to ground the analysis, I present Crip theory, its essence and the criticism directed at the concept, by mainly drawing from the “capabilities” approach, and gloss my position to it. Secondly, I examine how a d/Disabled rapper, Mc Koo, refigures his d/Disabled experience by drawing from narratives of rapperhood⁵⁹ and in doing so, is Criping culture. Lastly, by examining an interview between Mc Koo and Finland’s president, Sauli Niinistö, I investigate how d/Disabled persons within Kivimedia can “test” ableism and mediate a space where d/Disability functions as a critical interrogation of ableist status quo, manifesting itself both in and across interaction.

Crip theory and Compulsory a/Able-bodiedness

Robert McRuer addresses with Crip theory⁶⁰ a critique of what the author deems “compulsory able-bodiedness”. Like compulsory heteronormativity, McRuer argues, compulsory able-bodiedness functions “by covering over, with the appearance of choice, a system in which there actually is no choice” (McRuer 2006: 8). McRuer positions Crip theory as the means by which compulsory a/Able-bodiedness is disclosed, suggesting that d/Disabled bodies are the ones “best positioned to refuse ‘mere toleration’ and to call out the inadequacies of compulsory able-bodiedness” (Ibid: 31). Following David Halperin’s recognition of the term “queer”, the author imagines that Crip function best as positionality and resistance, as “transforming...- about criping- the substantive, material uses to which queer/disabled existence has been put by a system of compulsory able-bodiedness" (Ibid).

⁵⁹ Like personhood but based on the identity of being a rapper.

⁶⁰ Some authors use crip, while others utilize Crip. I choose the latter.

McRuer has been criticized by material Disability scholars for ignoring the substantive, material reality of d/Disability. For example, Vehmas and Watson (2014) and Bone (2017) argues that Crip theory, alongside other critical disability studies (CDS), fail in contesting the oppression of d/Disability and the ethical issues involved in ableism and is falling short of producing any actual social justice for d/Disabled people. Rather, the authors contend, Disability scholars are better equipped by considering the capabilities approach to d/Disability, revolving around the concepts of “functionings”, referring to “state of the person; things such as literacy, health, mobility, and the ability to appear in public without shame” and “capabilities”, denoting the “real freedoms to or opportunities to achieve functionings” (Vehmas and Watson 2014: 644).

McRuer seems to involve a large degree of intentionality into the act of Criping; he reads it as a direct, concrete act of resistance that d/Disabled people can engage in by will. In those terms, I must side with Vehmas and Watson, but simultaneously I recognize that the critique is somewhat missing the point. The best way to utilize the concept is to read it as emergent in interaction: by drawing from available narratives within the framework of agentive negotiation, d/Disabled persons make *the interactional meta-framework visible*. It can be intentional, but more often relational, dialogical and reactional: Crip is both about being *and* doing⁶¹. This reading aligns with McRuer’s definition but avoids the trap-of-intention that Criping risks when it is read as an action, rather than a vector of reflection.

Rap, Ableism and the Renegotiation of d/Disability

To decode how Kivimedia is Criping culture, I want to consider the lyrics to a song by Mc Koo, or Kalle Havumäki⁶², a prominent member of the media workshop who has garnered some national attention by being a d/Disabled rapper. The lyrics I refer to are from a song “Kolamies” (*Cola-man*), the tune with the most views on his Youtube channel⁶³:

⁶¹ I do not ignore the fact that Criping can be intentional. However, when perceived as interactional achievement, the intentionality of interlocutors becomes blurred. Hence, it is analytically more fruitful to frame Crip in terms of reaction and relation. A more exhaustive discussion on my positioning within Crip theory can be found in the Introduction, under Theoretical Framework.

⁶² I will refer to him as Mc Koo or Koo, given that he usually refers to himself using his stage name.

⁶³ A link to the song in question: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8XKGJiXcpPw>

Sitä kolaa mä haluun maistaa ja juoda itteni sokerihumalaan

[I want to taste that cola and drink myself into a sugar hop]

Mä juon kokista sitku mulle sitä tarjotaan

[I drink cola, whenever I am offered it]

Kun mä juon sitä kolaa alkaa päästä mukavasti vippaa ja mc Koo on sokerihumalassa, ihan mukavassa sellaisessa

[When I drink it, I get a fuzzy feeling, and mc Koo is in a sugar hop, in a good way]

Kola on tosi hyvä juoma

[Cola is a really good drink]

Ja mc koo haluaa vaan sitä juoda

[The only drink for Mc Koo]

Jos lähen teijän kaa juhlimaan

[If I ride out with you, to join a party]

Kolaa menee ainakin neljä lasillista

[I drink at least four full glasses]

En pidä zeroista enkä mistään kola lightista

[I neither like zero, nor cola light]

Koska se on ihan hirveen makusta

[Because it tastes horrendous]

Enkä edes ymmärrä

[I don't even understand]

Miksi sellaista juomaa pitää tehdä

[Why such a drink is produced]

Sä oot zero mies eli täysi nolla

[You're a zero guy, equaling a loser]

Mä oon kola mies joten anna olla

[I'm a cola guy, so let me be]

Kolamies hommat hallussa ja

[Cola-man controlling the scene]

Muutama pullo taskussa

[With a few bottles down my pocket]

In the video, Mc Koo walks with an aggressive attitude along snowy streets in Kallio, Helsinki. The borough is known for the abundance of bars and nightclubs, and has historically been associated with a harsh, borderline criminal climate. Koo visits some bars where he sips on a Coca-Cola with content, either with or without a lemon slice on the side. The video concludes with a shot from an Mc Koo gig where the rapper, alongside an a/Able-bodied sidekick, sings the chorus of the song in unison with a jubilant audience. The video, together with the lyrics, aligns with many narrational tropes that are ubiquitous in Finnish hip-hop.

Firstly, we have the aggressive attitude, signaled both by the expressions on Koo's face, hand gestures and a harsh attitude towards persons who drink Coca-Cola zero, instead of the "good" stuff. Then, the trope of a "drunken state": Koo indicates that he gets a "fuzzy" feeling, in a good way, when experiencing a sugar hop. Also, "being drunk" is attached to a narrative of partying: Koo exclaims that whenever he joins a party, he drinks at least four glasses of Coca-Cola, a parallel to the various narratives of letting loose and downing drinks as generally used in hip-hop lyrics. The song name itself can be read as a wordplay: in Finnish slang, "kola" is a term used for cocaine, in addition to signifying the beverage in question. Thus, the song name is also alluding to "the cocaine-man".

An interesting resignification of rap discursive elements is taking place, which also depicts a form of Criping. The tropes of getting drunk, letting loose, and having an attitude towards people who do not share one's views are recognizable as normative narratives in rap-music⁶⁴. However, in the song, common rap elements are transformed into something more

⁶⁴ For the occasional sceptic, see the Notorious B.I.G documentary, Biggie: I got a story to tell.

humorous and childish. Rather than rapping about alcohol and cocaine, Koo is rapping about Coca-Cola, which points to a completely different cultural phenomenon. The reasons for this are probably rather simple: Koo enjoys drinking the beverage and wants to rap about it. Another reason can be read as a veiled one: Koo is rapping about Coca-Cola because he cannot rap about cocaine and alcohol. The discrepancy between the cultural values ascribed to his biographical d/Disabled persona and the values attached to drugs and alcohol is too great.

The situation can be understood as a covert function of ableism. The cultural meanings perpetuating drugs and alcohol cannot be attached to a d/Disabled body, because of the socio-cultural identification of d/Disabled individuals as “helpless” agents. Remember, Kulick and Rydström (2015) describe how d/Disabled people are historically attached to a “helpless” category of agents, sharing social space with children, among others. Thus, if Koo were to rap about drugs and alcohol, the scenario would resemble a case in which a child is rhyming about alcohol and drug abuse. It could be done, but would be received as irony or satire, not as a literal description of a child’s state of being. Hence, we are informed about a type of *ableist resignification*, indicating that some cultural values attached to rap emblems become transformed when placed on a d/Disabled body. The discrepancy between the aggressive hustler attitude portrayed by Koo, the signification of “kola” (=cocaine) and the fact that Koo is rhyming about Coca-Cola makes the scenario rather funny, as many of the messages in the comment-field evidence.

A veil of irony is seemingly shadowing both the song and its reception, a case that resonates with the argument outlined in chapter two in relation to the song performed by Joni Elonen, on how irony becomes a narrational framework to express anxieties. I do not contend that Koo is consciously making a critique towards his socio-cultural marginalization in this song. However, the song itself Crips the “helpless” meanings attached to a d/Disabled body. It makes the ideological and material dimensions of d/Disabled experience within an ableist system visible.

Interestingly, Kivimedia allows Mc Koo to claim d/Disabled agency in two dimensions. On the one hand, Koo is reclaiming the values attached to his “helpless” category. He resignifies the childish attributes attached to Coca-Cola and turns them into something serious, despite doing it in a humorous way. On the other hand, Koo engages in a Criping of the ableist

surrounding that restricts his access to forms of rapperhood. He goes beyond them and claims space as a “true” rapper, rather than a d/Disabled rapper. The Kivimedia counterpublic provides frameworks through which Koo can assert his identity outside the spatial-temporal ableist matrix that restricts and polices him. In Kivimedia, Koo is a rapper, in the same ways as Jari Nordström is a reporter, and Miika is a punk-rocker. Identity and counterpublicity become mutually intertwined. Here, d/Disabled speakers can negotiate competencies outside an a/Able gaze by engaging a d/Disabled gaze. Or rather, their “abnormalness” is transformed to a position of “normalness”; d/Disability is recognized as a valued, valid and competent status. The transformation is achieved and accessed in and across interaction, the surrounding adapts to the marginalized individual, rather than the other way around.

Cripping as Interactional Achievement

An example that amplifies the argument is a video⁶⁵ on Youtube, shared on Radio Valo’s account (Kivimedia’s former name), where Mc Koo interviews the president of Finland, Sauli Niinistö, at the presidential home in Mäntyniemi, Helsinki. The video illustrates how Kivimedia provides transformational frameworks for d/Disabled interlocutors and how Kivimedia as a counterpublic, by political address, is Crippling culture.

In the sequence, an interesting mix of registers and addresses are evident. A personal touch imbues the segment, despite it being an informative piece of journalism. The relationship between Mc Koo and the president is emphasized, as signified by Niinistö asking “muistatko kun nähtiin viimeeksi” (*do you remember when we last met?*) in the beginning of the interview, after Mc Koo has iterated “Tää on mulle suuri juttu, presidenttihän on Suomen tärkein herrasmies, kaikkihan sen ties. Toivon, että presidentti tykästyy nähdessään tutun herrasmiehen.” (*This is an honor to me, the president is Finland’s most important gentleman, everybody knows that. I hope that the president likes it when he meets a familiar gentleman.*), indicating that they have met before and share a mutual interest in portraying their relationship as one of friendship. They even hug each other after a formal handshake, which is atypical for interviews where the president partakes.

⁶⁵ A link to the video described: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bLyhU10wK8Q>.

Further, Mc Koo's interactional stances are intriguing. The interview both begins and ends by him hinting on tropes of his rapperhood. Koo introduces himself to the camera as "Kalasataman kingi" (*the king of Kalasatama*), wearing a large cap, a typical hip hop sartorial emblem. Also, the following interchange closes out the segment:

Sauli: Pidäksä noin päin lakkia?

[Sauli: Do you wear your cap in that way?]

Koo: Räppäriin pitää... se on mun tyyli!

[Koo: A rapper needs to... It is my style!]

Sauli: Ai niin joo, räppäri pitää noi päin!

[Sauli: Oh yeah, a rapper needs to wear it like that!]

Koo: Tottakai!

[Koo: Of course!]

Sauli: Mää pidän toisinpäin lippalakkia kun...

[Sauli: I wear it the other way around when...]

The dialogue demonstrates how Mc Koo is drawing from his identity as a rapper ("A rapper needs to... It is my style!"). His rapperhood becomes an interactional achievement: by mutual alignment, Koo and the president construct an image of how a cap should be worn by a "true" rapper. A clear line is drawn between them; the president notes that he always wears a cap the other way around, hence, Koo's rapperhood is amplified.

However, for the most part of the interview, Koo is embodying a positionality of a reporter, rather than a rapper. The linguistic space that Koo is mediating is interesting: he poses a series of questions, both formal and informal, and utilizes a veil of irony to interact with the president. For example, when they sit down, Mc Koo iterates:

Koo: Tänään olen saapunut tänne Mäntyniemeen haastattelemaan erittäin erittäin kunniaakasta, suurta ja mahtavaa tyyppiä, Sauli Niinistöä. Oikein hyvää päivää!".

[Koo: Today I have arrived here at Mäntyniemi to interview a very, very honorable, grand and awesome dude, Sauli Niinistö. A very good day to you!]

Sauli: Oikein hyvää päivää. Vähän ylisanoja käytit.

[Sauli: A very good day to you too. You used quite the superlatives.]

Koo: Anteeks?

[Koo: Sorry?]

Sauli: Vähän ylisanoja!

[Sauli: Quite the superlatives!]

Koo: Ymmärrän, teidän arvoisuutenne.

[Koo: I understand, your majesty.]

The sequence is concluded with a shared laugh; both Koo and the president find the situation funny. Niinistö is known for portraying himself as a “man of the people” (“Koko Kansan Sauli”, [*The whole nation’s Sauli*] is a term often used). Hence, when Koo is identifying the president’s greatness using superlatives, Niinistö attempts to downplay the situation, followed by Koo’s ironic comeback, referring to the president as “his majesty”, taking the superlatives even further. Similar sequences are prevalent in the interview, which speaks to how Koo draws from frameworks of both humor and irony to underline the informal nature of the interview. Many of the questions follow a similar suit: Koo asks whether the president feels safe with all his security guards and whether the president has a fear of heights or suffers from claustrophobia. The questions are designed to manifest the friendly nature of the dialogue and help the president to perform in an unpresidential manner, which can be read as a strategic design on the behalf of Koo and Kivimedia, raising questions about what “they are up to by the means of it”. They are attempting to create a relaxed atmosphere where the president is interrogated as a fellow human being, rather than the embodiment of an institutional position. Hence, a sequence in the middle of the segment sticks out:

Koo: Mitä tiedät kehitysvammaisten palveluista, voisiko esimerkiksi asumispalvelua parantaa esim. niin että kehitysvammaiset voivat itse päättää missä he asuvat?

[Koo: What do you know about the disability services, could, for example, the housing services be improved so that the disabled could choose for themselves where they live?]

Sauli: Ymmärtääkseni tässä on menty aika paljon eteenpäin, että laitospa... laitoksissa olevien kehitysvammaisten määrä on alenemaan päin koko ajan ja varmasti ja toivon mukaan se kehitys jatkuu. Jolloin sitten tilalle ovat tulleet nämä palveluasunnot niinkuin se Kipparitalokin ymmärtääkseni on ja ne tuntuvat olevan kovin hyviä järjestelyjä. Että saa elää vapaasti, mutta toisaalta sitten on tarvittava apu lähellä.

[Sauli: To my understanding, the situation has improved, that institutions... The amount of disabled people living in institutions has been reducing all the time and I hope that this progress continues. They have been replaced by service apartments, like Kipparitalo, to my understanding, and those seem like really good arrangements. You get to live freely, but on the other hand you get help if needed.]

Koo: Poliittinen kysymys: Mitä yhteistä on Obamalla ja Putinilla?

[Koo: Political question: What does Obama and Putin have in common?]

Sauli: Molemmat ovat merkittävän maan johdossa. En ole koskaan nähnyt heitä yhdessä muuta kun valokuvassa joten enempien yhtäläisyyksien osalta en osaa kyllä sanoa, mutta kumpikin, maansa kiistaton johtaja.

[Sauli: Both are the leading figures of powerful countries. I have never seen them together except in pictures, so I can't speculate on further resemblances, but both are the indisputable leader of their respective countries.]

Koo: Disney-kysymys. Mikä hahmo olisit Disney-hahmoista?

[Koo: Disney-question. What Disney character would you be?]

In a clear detachment from the questions overarching the sequence, this interchange has a different tone and address. Suddenly, Koo poses a straightforward question in relation to d/Disability politics, on whether it could be an improvement to let d/Disabled people choose for themselves where they live, an issue vocalized by d/Disability interest groups for decades. The president gives a dodgy answer (a hesitation in the beginning of his response signals that the president is carefully considering his words). Rather than providing a direct response to Koo's question, Niinistö signals other actualities related to d/Disabled housing. He points out that the amount of d/Disabled people living in institutions is on the decline, and praises service apartments, where the d/Disabled get to "live freely", while also having access to help when needed.

Granted, these apartments are formidable solutions, but many d/Disabled critics question the priorities behind them, arguing that service apartments are low-cost, economy-first, solutions where the employed helpers avoid moving from place A to place B if d/Disabled person A and person B are living under the same roof. Thus, the solution is derived from economic-political reasoning, rather than being grounded in d/Disabled peoples' wishes and needs. According to the UN's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), every d/Disabled individual has the right to choose where and how to live, without any influence of external actors⁶⁶. It would have been interesting to see the president's response if Koo had referred to that declaration when stating his question⁶⁷.

Hence, Koo's questioning can be read as a test. An imbalance in the dialogue is created by the movement away from informality. Here, we can perceive a clash between two agendas. On the one hand, Kivimedia seeks to position themselves as an informal, friendly interactional partner, while also exhibiting a degree of political potency. The testing character of Koo's question describes how Kivimedia is seeking to politicize their visit to Mäntyniemi in a veiled fashion. On the other hand, the president (and his staff) is seeking to manifest himself as a relaxed, fellow human being. However, when Koo poses the question on d/Disabled housing, the unpresidential nature of the interview becomes transformed. The president, as the head of state, is obliged to return to a presidential register, and speak according to the social policy ruling that takes place in Finland.

Interestingly, Koo's utterance "A political question: what does Obama and Putin have in common?" (*Poliittinen kysymys: Mitä yhteistä on Obamalla ja Putinilla?*) is signifying two overlapping levels of index. On one level of index, the formulation "a political" question is compelling. It entails that this question is the political one, rather than the former related to d/Disabled housing. Hence, the framing can be read as a covert endeavor to indirectly disguise the political essence of the housing question, which in its substance seems to be the apparent political issue at hand. On a second level of index, the framing of the question can be understood as Koo's venture to restabilize the interaction: he seeks to return the humorous, laidback register

⁶⁶ Article-19, link to source: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-19-living-independently-and-being-included-in-the-community.html>

⁶⁷ Because, in a sense, the "service apartments" that the president is alluding to, might be formidable solutions for some, while breaking the UN's declaration in other cases.

that both have drawn from during the interview. How Koo asks the question, with a smirk on his face, signifies that it is addressed as a light-hearted one. However, the president does not pick up on this. Seemingly, the question is risky: Niinistö cannot give a humorous answer because if taken out of context, his response could have political implications. Hence, he resides in his presidential register, and gives a vague, diplomatic explanation instead. Then, to finalize the stabilization, Koo wonders about Niinistö's identification with Disney characters, which allows the president to return to a partially un-presidential register, and the witty character of the interaction returns.

The interchange between Niinistö and Mc Koo entail two things. Firstly, the segment signals a scenario in which the d/Disabled interlocutor must abide by the rules of an a/Able-hearing context. The anxiousness, an outcome of Koo's testing, is stabilized by him, the d/Disabled speaker, rather than the a/Able speaker, president Niinistö. However, in the sequence, Koo is the one that repairs an imbalance that is an effect of his own testing. Hence, secondly, when positing the interview as an example of social action, we can recognize how Mc Koo, as a rapper and a reporter, is the focal point of the exchange. On an interactional level, the president must adapt in accordance with questions and expectations placed upon him, by Mc Koo. d/Disability as negotiated by Koo through narratives of rapperhood and humor, invites a d/Disabled gaze and becomes the foci around which all interaction revolves.

Cripping in and across Interaction

To reveal and transform the positionalities of d/Disabled people within an ableist spatial-temporal matrix, a dialogue between d/Disabled and a/Able talkers, and mutual learning/unlearning is required. In the interaction between Koo and Niinistö, Koo's identification as a rapper and a reporter are achieved interactionally. These identifications are never in danger because both speakers are establishing a footing according to them. Also, the platform that Kivimedia provides for Koo, allowing him to interview the president in the first place, is one where his competencies as a musician and a reporter are encouraged and motivated. In other words, Kivimedia engages in counterpublic-making where Koo and other d/Disabled speakers can negotiate belonging and claim space outside ableist policing. The scenario entails how, by drawing from available narratives of agentive negotiation, d/Disabled members are explicitly

invited to criticize, test and overcome the ableist matrix that seeks to restrict them, and implicitly make those mechanisms visible.

Hence, Kivimedia provides access to that which Vehmas and Watson deems as functionings and capabilities. In the interaction with Niinistö, Koo is drawing from functionings, "...mobility, and the ability to appear in public without shame" and is establishing a link to capabilities, denoting the "opportunities to achieve functionings" (Vehmas and Watson 2014: 644). When obtaining the time and space, Koo is the one guiding and suggesting. The interaction both revolves and evolves around him, the d/Disabled agent, rather than the a/Able-bodied agent. By inviting a d/Disabled gaze, Kivimedia, at best, construes a political situation where the d/Disabled person becomes the "normal" around which all speakers, including a/Able-bodied ones, must interactionally adapt.

In other words, by accessing his functionings and capabilities, Koo engages in the Criping of d/Disabled experience: he both reveals and transforms the d/Disabled positionality within an ableist structuration. He overhauls the situation, turns it upside down; he mediates a positionality around which all interaction flows. Thus, the sequence exemplifies two things. Firstly, we are informed about how Criping is both about *being* and *doing*⁶⁸. Secondly, in order to engage in a successful interaction, president Niinistö must recognize Mc Koo's d/Disability as an interactional status that allows Koo to negotiate his d/Disabled experience by drawing from narratives of competence, humor and validity.

Stanton Wortham and Angela Reyes (2015) argue that in order to understand social processes that take place over time and space, analysts must move beyond the singular interactional event and examine the ways in which discourse and social action is interactionally established as "pathways across events". In other words, social life becomes narrated and compressed both in interaction, but also *across* interaction, as repetitions of similar discursive phenomena. Dovetailing Wortham and Reyes, the stance-taking between Mc Koo and the president is captivating. When understood as alignment in accordance with a construal of

⁶⁸ Mc Koo Crips by virtue of relation and dialogue (speaking as a d/Disabled agent to an a/Able gaze) and reaction (draws from narratives that are available to him by virtue of being included in Kivimedia's public platform), while also doing it in action (creative stance-taking).

d/Disability as a source of value, the interaction can be read as one chain in the “pathway of events” that is constitutive of Kivimedia as a counterpublic.

Similarly, in the opening example of this chapter, Jari, in drawing from a narrative of competence and employment, establishes an expectation of d/Disability around which the artist Reija and musician Pertti align themselves. We can read the segment where Pertti is congratulating Jari on a successful “passing”, and Jari’s consequential resistance, as a leakage from the interdiscursive positioning of d/Disability as a source of legitimate agency. In examples from chapter one and chapter two⁶⁹, we are informed by how interlocutors are identifying d/Disability as a source of value, both individually and collectively. The alignments according to this configuration of d/Disability concerns both d/Disabled and a/Able-bodied speakers; and importantly, the alignments are manifested in dialogue. They all constitute respective chains in the “pathway of events” that together produces a collective Criping and renegotiation of d/Disability in Kivimedia.

Hence, Kivimedia, as a discursive counterpublic, allows d/Disabled speakers to draw from narratives that enables them to reinterrogate and reconfigure their d/Disabled experience on their own terms, as something legitimate. Under these conditions, in order to participate in the making of this counterpublic, a/Able-bodied people *must* adjust their expectations in accordance with the image of d/Disability as a valid interactional category and a valued, empowered positionality. In other words, Kivimedia produces a d/Disabled-hearing context that places expectations of (reconfigured) normativity upon both d/Disabled and a/Able-bodied people.

We are informed by a linguistic space that is imbued by ambivalence. On the one hand, a/Able-bodied speakers gloss and recast d/Disabled language, a process that indexes a reproduction of an ableist linguistic ideology within a hegemonic a/Able-hearing context. On the other hand, through mutual alignment and learning/unlearning, d/Disabled and a/Abled talkers dialogically reimagine the ableist status quo and potentially overhaul it. At best, a hearing context is produced where the roles become interchanged; both d/Disabled and a/Able-bodied speakers must align according to expectations of normativity as defined by d/Disabled persons.

⁶⁹ See for example the opening example in chapter two between Inka and Jasmin, Joni Elonen’s song, or the concluding sequence in chapter one, where cohesiveness is construed collectively.

These two projects coexist, overlap and imbue one another: together they construe the ambivalence of ableism.

We are reminded by two overlapping arguments made in this essay. Firstly, as noted in chapter one, recasting, and the consequential ableist linguistic normalization, usually takes place in an unconscious, veiled fashion. The latter scenario, where the roles are subverted, is indicative of the conscious, collective project saturating the politics of Kivimedia⁷⁰. Secondly, the situation in which all interaction flows against the backdrop of d/Disability as a valued and a competent category, offers a counterexample to Tanya Titchkosky's (2001, 2009) reasoning on how an ableist prevention of the negotiation between pathology and normalcy denies the possibility that d/Disability is perceived as a critical space where the dominance of the ideology of individualism can be interrogated for *all* people. By following how d/Disabled members are Criping and reconfiguring their d/Disabled experiences in dialogue with a/Able-bodied helpers, we are informed how in Kivimedia, at best, the ableist prevention of the negotiation of normalcy is subverted. d/Disability becomes a vector through which all interaction, and extensively, all social action, between d/Disabled and a/Able-bodied people is established. Under these conditions, d/Disability is initiated as a critical space of relationality where ableist ideologies are interrogated for all interactants.

⁷⁰ And, by extension, Lyhty.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have outlined an argument on the conditions of ableism and d/Disability in Kivimedia, covering three intertwined trajectories. Firstly, I examined how an ableist linguistic ideology is reproduced between a/Able-bodied and d/Disabled speakers. Primarily, I investigated the praxis of recasting, that indexes a mirroring of speech patterns in order to cue error recognition. By recasting and glossing speech, a/Able-bodied supervisors engage in a kind of suggested talk. On one level of index, these suggestions provide a linguistic framework from which d/Disabled speakers draw from in their broadcasting. Therefore, expectations of normativity and a normalized way of speaking is fabricated, as determined by a/Able talkers. In doing so, a/Able-bodied interlocutors are unconsciously engaging in a rather violent praxis: they regiment the use of d/Disabled language, producing a predetermined form of d/Disabled speech.

However, the linguistic process in Kivimedia is complex and ambivalent and always leaves room for other “serious games” to be played within a seemingly overdetermined one. On a second level of index, mimetic practice, in terms of alignment, expresses a construal of a speaking We, constituting a linguistic praxis that is including rather than excluding, and based on a conscious effort to manipulate the speech events in terms of a collaborative project. An ambivalent situation arises: a centrifugal linguistic pattern that regiments and polices d/Disabled language, coexists with a centripetal pattern that enables a cooperative dialogue between d/Disabled and a/Able-bodied speakers. Ableist reproduction is countered by the politics imbuing the Kivimedia project.

Hence, as a second trajectory, I have examined how Kivimedia engages in a discursive counterpublic-making by inviting a d/Disabled gaze. The counterpublic becomes marked in various fashions. Firstly, a collective mediation of an image of We is constituted in a dialogue between a/Abled and d/Disabled talkers and marks the “normative horizon” that all speakers are striving for. Secondly, Kivimedia is aligning with other, sympathetic counterpublicities, which become discursively circulated in Kivimedia’s public narrative. These are, for example, punk, rap and counterculture. The alignments allow us to read Kivimedia as a d/Disability counterpublic that functions against the backdrop to an a/Able-public (*the* public) and has a questioning relation to a/Able-bodied normativity. Its resistance is grounded in stance-taking and address: by rendering d/Disabled speakers’ linguistic space within a conventionally ableist

institution, and by providing a platform that addresses both a d/Disabled public and other, a/Able-bodied publics, Kivimedia creatively produces frameworks from which d/Disabled people can draw from to mediate a critical stance against a/Able-bodied hegemony. These frameworks include narratives of competence, belonging and interests, tropes that d/Disabled speakers do not necessarily have access to outside the public of Kivimedia.

Therefore, as a third trajectory, I argued that in producing a collaborative d/Disabled public space, Kivimedia allows d/Disabled interlocutors to negotiate a sense of belonging and interrogate their d/Disabled experience outside an ableist spatial-temporal matrix that restricts d/Disabled peoples' access to functionings and capabilities. In doing so, d/Disabled people both relationally and dialogically engage in a criticism of normativity, both in and across interaction. They make the positionalities of d/Disabled bodies and identities within ableist structures visible. Hence, they Crip culture. By drawing from competences and collaborative projects outside the ableist matrix, d/Disabled identities become reinterrogated as valued, agentive positionalities.

Conclusively, I noted that by enabling the Criping of culture, Kivimedia functions as a counterpublic where d/Disability becomes reconfigured as a status of validity, around which both d/Disabled and a/Able-bodied speakers dialogically negotiate belonging. d/Disability becomes a positionality through which all interaction flows; for a/Able-bodied speakers to partake in the counterpublic, they are obliged to change footing according to the conceptualization of d/Disability as a legitimate, valued category. Hence, Kivimedia facilitates the construction of a d/Disabled-hearing context that places expectations of normativity on both a/Able-bodied and d/Disabled individuals. In doing so, Kivimedia, at best, subverts an ableist scenario where d/Disabled speakers must adapt according to a/Able-bodied hearing subjects.

The examination of Kivimedia highlights how the linguistic reproduction of ableism is inherently an ambiguous phenomenon. The ambivalence stems from the interactional stance-taking between d/Disabled and a/Able-bodied speakers. Because of the limits of current social organization to the benefit of the d/Disabled, a/Able-bodied speakers, even within progressive projects like Kivimedia, speak on behalf of the d/Disabled. On the surface, we are informed by a violent reproduction of ableist normativity, imbued by a linguistic ideology that polices d/Disabled language. However, this process cooccurs, even aligns with, a conscious struggle to

produce a linguistic space which is open-ended and accessible for d/Disabled speakers, entailing a relational and dialogical pursuit of cohesiveness.

Hence, Kivimedia exemplifies how ableism can be simultaneously unconsciously reproduced, while all participants are consciously striving towards a collective goal of solidarity. This juxtaposition, the coexistence of two oppositional linguistic projects that imbue one another with indexicality and meaning, and takes place both in and across interaction, constitutes the ambivalence of ableism. Overt and covert linguistic practices intersect and coproduce a scenario where both projects are possible at the same time.

This ambiguity entails two readings of d/Disabled experience. Firstly, the dialogical relationship between two contradictory linguistic projects can be read as an outcome of the limits of d/Disability politics and social services provided for the d/Disabled. In other words, despite ideologically constituting a progressive type of d/Disability service in Finland, Kivimedia is materially operating within the ableist spatial-temporal matrix that it seeks to criticize. Regardless of initiating a linguistic space where d/Disability can be reconfigured, Kivimedia manifests a workshop within a d/Disability NGO where d/Disabled persons engage in exemplary employment rather than wage labor, supporting a material marginalization of d/Disabled people within an ableist institution.

Secondly, the coexistence of two opposing yet mutually constitutive linguistic projects that define d/Disabled language supports the omnipresence of contingency, and how d/Disabled speakers are always finding ways in which they can seek to distort ableist determinism, by playing “games of their own”. In Kivimedia, these games are played in unison with a/Able-bodied allies. Together they produce a space where a dialogue between d/Disabled and a/Able-bodied speakers is the categorical necessity for positive transformations both on a micro and macro level, both in and across interaction.

Kivimedia recognizes d/Disability as a positionality of agentive validity, rather than a state of being that must be “overcome” or “passed” for validation. In doing so, Kivimedia exemplifies how ableist surroundings can adjust and align according to the d/Disabled speaker, rather than the other way around. This scenario resonates with Jonathan Rosa’s and Nelson Flores’s (2017) call for the responsibility of white-hearing contexts to adapt according to racialized speakers, rather than vice versa.

Importantly, Kivimedia highlights how d/Disability and ableism, when perceived as an interactional achievement both in and across interaction, is also something that can be unlearned. The reproduction and learning of ableism on the one hand, and the resistance and the unlearning on the other, are both about relational alignment and the establishment of footing according to culturally typified narratives, tropes and strategies concerning d/Disability.

Hence, the unlearning of ableism is hinged upon the way in which societies are successful at producing socio-political spaces where empowering narratives and frameworks are accessible for the negotiation of d/Disabled experience. Alison Kafer writes:

“This kind of robust combination of future dreams and present critique is essential to politics, and it requires leaving open the parameters of our political visions. Our animating questions could then include the following: Who is included or excluded in our political imaginaries? How are “disability” and “disabled person” (or “woman” or “queer” or “race” or...) being defined in these dreams of the future? Who has access to these imaginaries, and how is access being described?”
(Kafer 2013: 153)

Dovetailing Kafer, I contend, we must recognize two overlapping scenarios. Firstly, the unlearning of ableism is rooted in a dialogue between d/Disabled and a/Able-bodied people. We must cooperate and strive for collective change to transform a violent status quo. Together, we imagine the future dreams where the reconceptualization of d/Disability, as imbued by narratives of competence, value and belonging, is possible. If not, we reproduce a society where the d/Disabled are hindered from achieving their full potential: a politically permeated, violent situation.

Secondly, echoing Rosa and Flores, despite recognizing the necessity of a cooperative dialogue between d/Disabled and a/Able-bodied people, the primary responsibility lies within the historically reified ableist institutions. In other words, the a/Able-hearing society, rather than the d/Disabled speaker, is accountable for producing transformative action. The unlearning of ableism is an achievement in practice; it constitutes ways of “doing” which, at best, reproduces new ways of “being”.

d/Disability as a valued category of political and public membership (as it is identified in Kivimedia) must be recognized more broadly. This concerns all spheres of social reproduction, to ensure that a reconfigured d/Disability can be interdiscursively picked up in as many

contextual interactions as possible. Both intellectual work and material transformations are needed. For example, Don Kulick and Jens Rydström highlight how progressive politics regarding d/Disabled sexuality is dependent on the individual and collective interventions that are made to facilitate those with impairments to access their sexuality, through both concrete practices and education. According to Tom Shakespeare, “the priority for a progressive disability politics is to engage with impairments, not ignore it” (Kulick and Rydström 2015: 263).

Here, material interventions coincide with linguistic praxis. Concrete practices produce indexicalities for possible social action, and vice versa. The two reproduce one another. The engagement with material conditions and progressive, imaginative politics, are mutually constitutive. Hence, d/Disability must be recognized as a normalized element in social reproduction and as a valued, agentive, political positionality. Then, we can facilitate the interdiscursively circulated acknowledgment of d/Disability as a legitimate interactional category, which is manifested in concrete action.

Anthropologists have an opportunity to influence a positive outcome. Cassandra Hartblay argues that situated d/Disabled expertise, whereby the positionalities of marginalized subjects are seen as niched ontological knowledge, is helpful to think and act around. Hartblay contends: “Disability anthropology embraces disability as an epistemological concern for both empirical ethnographic inquiry and social theory. Disability comes into being through social relations; the attributes of disability in a given moment are not fixed but are negotiated and always changing.”; and continues: “Throughout the research process and presentation of results, people with disabilities, like all ethnographic subjects, are understood to be experts of their own experience” (Hartblay 2019: 34).

By recognizing d/Disabled expertise, we, as scholars, can do two things. Firstly, we secure an epistemologically sound way of portraying d/Disability and avoid that which Tanya Titchkosky (2001) constitutes as “speaking on behalf” of the d/Disabled. We must reflect on how we produce knowledge about d/Disability and what different discourses interplay and overlap in the production of the image of the d/Disabled. The work must hinge upon a mutual dialogue between scholars that approach d/Disability from a medicalized standpoint, and those approaching it as socio-political signification, myself included. Similarly, as Hartblay contends, the work necessitates a collaboration with d/Disabled persons, given that only they can

experience d/Disability as a condition through which one's reality is both negotiated and communicated. If done correctly, we avoid an overt, potentially violent, reproduction of research that is speaking-on-behalf-of-the-d/Disabled. I recognize that my own project lurks somewhere in the gray area when it comes to this issue. However, I have attempted to let the words, as uttered by d/Disabled persons themselves within contexts where they-are-speaking-for-themselves, to guide my analysis.

Secondly, by acknowledging d/Disabled expertise, anthropologists, and other scholars, can draw linkages between research and activism, synthesizing linguistic practice with concrete action. Alison Kafer (2013) engages a discussion on the ways in which feminist, queer and Crip scholars should pursue collaborations across epistemological boundaries to imagine alternative futures for the d/Disabled. The author's account covers material, ideological and interactional categorizations, marking how imaginative work can be pursued to diversify the framework for cross-boundary collaboration, and the organization of activism.

Hence, the perception of d/Disability must be rewritten from being a state of overt marginalization, a "helpless" agent, into being a valued, agentic, collaborative relation. Intellectually, we must follow Hartblay's notion of d/Disability expertise. Materially, we must secure a recognition of d/Disabled persons' access to spheres of social reproduction. Kulick and Rydström (2015) argue that the access to sexuality and sexual lives for d/Disabled is a question of fundamental social justice and is "crucial for a life with dignity". However, sexuality is merely one sphere among many that the d/Disabled need access to. The same applies to every imaginable category that we deem as a necessary factor to achieve the status of active and whole citizens.

The slogan "nothing without us", that often is depicted as the motto of d/Disabled activism, is worth taking seriously. Both as a trope within politics and as a rule of life. In doing so, we hopefully engage in a coproduction of d/Disabled-hearing contexts where d/Disability is recognized publicly, rather than endured privately. Kivimedia codifies a cultural project where this process is enabled and that we can look up to. What we learn by examining the productional context of Kivimedia is that under the right circumstances, all d/Disabled agents can be as capable, innovative and self-reliant as Jari Nordström when he states, "But look, this is my job!". d/Disability should not be an obstacle to reach one's full potential.

Coda

In this paper, I have examined how Kivimedia provides ideas for how d/Disability can be reconfigured. However, echoing the arguments by Vehmas and Watson (2014), I recognize that we need to do even more. Ideological work is not sufficient in and of itself to achieve positive outcomes. We need to address the material conditions under which d/Disabled people *live right now*.

The one material condition shaping d/Disability I want to touch upon, is that of employment⁷¹. I choose to do this because of two reasons. Firstly, the subject of d/Disabled employment is on the agenda of public debate. The Finnish government is planning to launch a new program whereby a national organization dedicated to incapacitated workers (as most working d/Disabled persons in Finland are defined as), is established (Hara 2021). The project, if finalized, could be profound. However, many d/Disability activists are voicing their concern that the project is merely political jargon, ultimately aimed at luring in votes in the upcoming municipal elections.

Secondly, Kivimedia is a workshop that employs people. In chapter two, I noted how a veiled discrepancy takes place when Onni, the a/Able-bodied instructor, introduces one d/Disabled participant in the media workshop as “our reporter colleague” (*toimittajakollegamme*). I argued that despite the framing is one of inclusion, aimed at construing an image of a cohesive speaking We, the statement conceals material conditions related to the employment of a/Able-bodied vis-à-vis d/Disabled people.

While Onni and other a/Abled instructors and helpers are engaging in wage labor, the d/Disabled participants do not receive the same wage and employment securities as their a/Able-bodied counterparts. Rather, they receive a form of daily allowance for participating in the workshop. In Finland, the social policy aimed at d/Disability employment follows this logic. Instead of accessing wage labor, d/Disabled people are restricted to the fringes of the labor market, only receiving state-funded subsidies for their engagement in daily activities⁷². In many

⁷¹ I contemplated on whether to narrow down this debate and weave it into the argument on the public politics of Kivimedia in chapter two. However, because the issue is urgent and requires a more nuanced explanation than a narrowed down argument would have allowed, I chose to elaborate the subject in a coda.

⁷² Here, “exemplary employment” is alluded. Again, the translation is provided by the Finnish Terminology Centre TSK.

situations, the tasks resemble “work” in all aspects, but are not legally defined as such. On a short sidenote, I can refer to my own experience working as a helper in a Swedish-speaking disability NGO in a group that was employed as subcontractors by a private contractor, tasked with (at the time of my employment, which was during the fall of 2015) packing reflectors from smaller packages into bigger ones. The tasks were monotonous, but importantly, most d/Disabled participants identified the tasks themselves as “work”. They spoke in terms of “coming to work”, feeling either happy or disheartened by something at “work” et cetera. Their surroundings, among them the institutions where the d/Disabled lived (and their families), also referred to the activities as “work”. However, in legal terms the activities were not framed as such.

In Kivimedia, the case is seemingly identical, as disclosed by the statement “But look, this is my job!” (*Tää on mun työ kato!*) made by the reporter Jari Nordström. In chapter two, Inka and Jasmin described their sense of security/insecurity, as largely centered around the conditions of their “workplace”. For example, Inka notes that “I enjoy my time here at work” (*Mä viihdyn täällä töissä*). However, on another occasion she states that “here at the media workshop” (*tällä media työpajassa*), indicating that the participation in the media workshop and the sense of doing “work” are interrelated, one and the same. Again, this speaks to the fact that Kivimedia frames the tasks that d/Disabled members engage in as “work”, despite not being legally identified wage labor.

One could even argue that Kivimedia’s ability to construct a cohesive counterpublic, relies on the fact that d/Disabled people identify the activities as work. At the very least, “work” is seemingly a principal motivation for the d/Disabled participants to partake in the radio broadcasting. And, as I have stated, this is not bad per se, just the opposite. For example, Jari’s engagement in Kivimedia allows him to draw from frameworks of competence that enables him to identify his activities in Kivimedia as work and to take the professional stance of a reporter. Kivimedia gives Jari access to tropes and narratives that are not available for him in ableist business-as-usual. The project is progressive within the social policy framework that encompasses d/Disability organizations in the Finnish society.

However, the case is curious. I have not heard anyone at Kivimedia speak about the problematic nature of framing the media workshop’s activities as work. This is not to say that the issue has never been addressed, after all, there are hundreds of hours of broadcasting I have not

listened to. Anyhow, it evidences how the discussion is not a common one, the reasons for which can be quite a few. Firstly, the absence of regular interrogations on this topic can indicate that the d/Disabled reporters and participants simply do not recognize the problem as one worth highlighting. Secondly, the absence can signify the risk in underlining the issue as a problematic one. If Kivimedia wants to produce a d/Disability counterpublic that has a questioning relationship to ableist social reproduction, a/Abled and d/Disabled persons must be able to identify as equals, something that a collective understanding of the “work” being done enables.

The subjects surrounding d/Disabled employment adds to the ambivalences of ableist reproduction. The issue at hand, and the solutions worth covering, are not straight-forward, black-and-white ordeals. However, as Vehmas and Watson argues, means to improve the material conditions that saturate d/Disabled lives are necessary changes we need to make.

In 2019, the Finnish League for Human Rights (*Ihmisoikeusliitto*) instigated the campaign #palkkaatyöstä (*#wageforwork*). The intent was to highlight the shortcomings of social policies that were designed to ensure a fair living condition for the d/Disabled in Finland. According to the campaign, in Finland, as of 2019, approximately 3% of all d/Disabled workers are engaging in wage labor. This surmounts to the miniscule number of 500-600 persons in the whole nation. At least 3000 individuals have expressed their desire to engage in wage labor (how the number is conceived is not clear). Hence, according to the campaign, the Finnish society does not acknowledge d/Disabled as sovereign “työntekijäkansalainen”⁷³, a term used to denote the financial and social bond between citizens and the society that comes with wage labor and the participation in the labor market on fair terms.

In an international comparison, the number of d/Disabled people engaging in wage labor is 26% in Canada and 35% in the US, highlighting the harsh reality that d/Disabled in Finland is up against⁷⁴. There are some regional differences, for example, in the municipality of Vantaa, the figure is 11%, which is the highest in Finland (*Ihmisoikeusliitto/2019*⁷⁵).

⁷³ A term I have not found an English equivalent for but loosely translates to “citizenship based on employment”.

⁷⁴ In Finland, the state-funded subsidies and pensions paid to d/Disabled persons might be more formidable. However, the figures speak for themselves.

⁷⁵ Link to the campaign: <https://ihmisoikeusliitto.fi/palkkaa-tyosta/>

On a blogpost in connection to the #palkkaatyöstä campaign, made by the Finnish Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (*Kehitysvammaliitto*), or FAIDD, a docent in labor and social law, Jaana Paanetoja, reflects on exemplary employment (*työtoiminta* or *avoin työtoiminta*) and work-related services provided for d/Disabled in Finland. According to Paanetoja, d/Disabled individuals often perform “normal work tasks” without receiving the protection under labor law. The author notes [translation made by me]⁷⁶:

“I wondered.... how exemplary employment, of which there is no index entry in the law, could have continued in Finland for so long. The source for the confusion was not so much the fact that exemplary employment has been utilized to organize meaningful tasks for clients, or the pursuit of integration to “normal” work life. Rather, I did not find then- and still have not found- an answer to the question of why social services in the first place includes the coordination of employment for a private sector employer, in some cases free of charge. And the crucial question: why has the circumstances not been corrected a long time ago?

Nowadays, the debate centers around the notion of responsibility of the employers, and ethical actions are called for. How can we justify that at some workplaces disabled individuals perform normal work tasks without the normal status of an employee? How does such a scenario align with responsible action?

When talking about exemplary employment for the disabled, it is often highlighted that what we are dealing with is work without a wage, and that the goal is to provide them with “real wage labor”. This line of thinking blurs the fact that in exemplary employment cases, the characteristics for a contractual employment relationship is already met. The issue is that the contractual employment is not recognized or acknowledged.”

Here, the material means and ends that should be pursued are evidenced. Firstly, private sector actors are able to exploit a legal conundrum, and utilize the services provided by Disability NGOs, which are included under the umbrella of social services and therefore should be non-profit driven, in their own profit-driven interests⁷⁷. This needs to change. Secondly, the

⁷⁶ For the original version in Finnish, see: <https://www.kehitysvammaliitto.fi/miksi-kehitysvammaisten-avotyotoiminta-jatkuu-yha/>.

⁷⁷ Lyhty and Kivimedia does not exemplify this scenario. According to Lyhty’s spokesperson, Lyhty provides services that municipalities demand. Nothing is aimed for private companies/contractors. All profits are invested into the internal organizational development.

discrepancy between how the ethics surrounding d/Disability is talked about, and what is done to address those issues, is underlined. This point echoes the argument made by Kulick and Rydström (2015) on the fundamental discrepancy between politics-as-talking and politics-as-doing. We need to synthesize linguistic praxis with concrete action.

Thirdly, and most importantly, Paanetoja notes that the debate on d/Disabled employment often focuses on the need to address the issue by providing “real wage labor” for d/Disabled, when they already are engaging in tasks that fill those characteristics. The problem, in the authors understanding, is that the tasks are not *recognized* as such, but rather typified as a form of social service. In a similar blogpost, one concerned mother to a Disabled youth comments:

Tyttäreni käy tuollaisessa ns työtoiminnassa. Hän saattaa saada 4€/pvä palkkaa jos urakka on suoritettu. Ruoasta hän maksaa samassa paikassa 5€/ateria ja kahvi/välipala 1.80/annos. 2×kahvi ja roka maksaa siis hänelle 8.60€/päivä. ”Palkka” 4€/päivä. Tyttäreni siis maksa 4.60€/päivässä KTO:lle jonain päivänä 8.60€/pvä jos urakka ”kusee” jotta voi pussittaa muovirinkuloita jollekin yritykselle joka myy niitä sitten hyllyssä alkaen 4€/pussi. Kehitysvammaisen hyväksikäyttöön, orjatyöhön, jonkun pitäisi pystyä puuttumaan. Ei ole yhdenkään kehitysvammaisen tuollainen työtoiminta.

[My daughter attends one of those so-called exemplary employments. She might get paid 4€/day if the tasks are completed. For the food at the same place, she pays 5€/meal and for coffee/snack 1.80/portion. That is, 2xcoffee and food costs her 8.60€/day. “Wage” 4€/day. In other words, my daughter pays 4.60€/day to KTO, somedays 8.60€/day if the tasks “turn out badly” that she can bag plastic hoops to some company that then sells them in stores for 4€/bag. We should be able to intervene in the abuse and slavery of the disabled. It is not for the good of any disabled, that kind of exemplary employment.]

This statement dovetails Paanetoja and aligns with many testimonies I have heard from d/Disabled persons themselves. For example, I meet a group of young people on the Autism spectrum regularly, and one of them is engaging in exemplary employment. He cleans office spaces, and for this activity he is paid a daily allowance that just about covers the fees he needs to pay for food and coffee. Therefore, he regularly chooses to work an 8-hour shift without any food besides some snacks, in order to get *any* monetary compensation for the actual work he performs. Almost every time I meet him, he uses the term “slavery” to describe the conditions under which he is working.

I raise these points to further add to the ambivalences imbuing my research. Kivimedia manifests a counterpublic where d/Disabled people can reconfigure their Disabled experiences. However, the project still exemplifies a case of exemplary employment, despite being one of a progressive kind. I doubt, based on my listening, that anybody in Kivimedia identifies their activities in the workshops as “slavery”. They find value and comfort in performing tasks that allow them to negotiate figures of identities that are not available for them under the policing of an ableist society. Plus, making radio is probably fun in their mind.

Hence, Kivimedia, despite engaging in metapragmatic and ideological work to the benefit of the d/Disabled, materially speaking, they are both part of, and contribute to, the reproduction of an ableist spatial-temporal matrix. Again, this is not the fault of Lyhty or Kivimedia per se. Rather, they are doing the best they can within the current socio-political climate that encompasses the services provided for the d/Disabled in Finland. Still, this is not sufficient in and of itself: more is needed.

Policy-wise, we should follow Paanetoja’s understanding of crucial action: the work done by the d/Disabled must be recognized as wage labor, rather than exemplary employment. In my understanding, this is more a question of principle than anything else. The infrastructure is already in place, a transformation merely hinges upon a resource reallocation that would be favorable to d/Disabled people themselves, rather than those aiding them. Moreover, we must continue to search for new ways to employ d/Disabled persons and protect their access to the labor market on equitable terms. Help them achieve positionalities that gives them visibility on their own terms. In Finland, such a process has been ongoing, but on a miniscule level. According to the #palkkaatyöstä campaign, those attending “työhönvalmennus”⁷⁸, which signifies that d/Disabled people receive individual aid in their work orientation and integration, are more successful in assimilating themselves on the labor market. For example, a d/Disabled woman, Satu Pietikäinen, one of the faces for the campaign, describes her situation as follows:

“Olen tehnyt avotyötä päivätoiminnassa ja vanhusten palvelutalossa. Tein siellä siivoustöitä. Sekin oli ihan kivaa, en valita. Mutta nyt olen palkkatöissä pesulassa. Saan kymmenen euroa tunnissa. Ennen sain saman verran päivässä. Pesen pyykkiä, mankeloin, hoidan pyykinpesukonetta ja kuivuria, vien pyykit kerroksiin. Korkea hygieniataso on

⁷⁸ I have found no official English equivalent, but the term is translated along the lines of “work-coaching”.

tärkeää. Tykkään työstäni. Osa-aikatyö tuo lisätuloja eläkkeen päälle. Ostin rahoilla kotiin tiskikoneen. Koirani Bella on myös saanut enemmän luksusta kuin ennen. Koira on minulle tärkeä. Asun omassa asunnossa koiran ja kissan kanssa. Palkkatyö on tehnyt minusta iloisemman: olen huomannut, että osaan ja minua arvostetaan. Haluan sanoa muille kehitysvammaisille, että hankkikaa työhönvalmentaja ja menkää rohkeasti palkkatyöhön.”

[“I have done exemplary employment in both day-centers and service housing for the elderly. I performed cleaning chores. That was also fun, I’m not complaining. But now I am doing paid work at a laundry room. I receive ten euros per hour. Before, I received the same amount in one day. I do laundry, handle the mangle, the washing machine and the dryer, and take the laundry to different floors. A high level of hygiene is important. I like my job. Part-time employment gives me additional incomes on top of my pension. With the money, I bought a dishwasher. My dog Bella is also receiving more luxury than before. The dog is important to me. I live in my own apartment with a dog and a cat. Wage labor has made me happier: I have noticed that I am capable and that I am valued. I want to tell other disabled people to get hold of a work-coach and bravely go for wage labor.”]

Satu’s testimony is indicative of how d/Disabled people under the right circumstances and with the right help, can achieve that which scholars like Vehmas and Watson (2014) and Bone (2017) deem as the most important factor in achieving social justice for the d/Disabled: access to functionings and capabilities. Satu’s sense of an increasing happiness and an understanding of her capabilities and the value they generate both for herself and her work environment, is precisely an outcome of her success at finding comfort in her competencies, to appear in front of a traditionally a/Able-bodied context without shame, and an appreciation of herself as a full human being. Satu embodies a sense of well-being that should be the goal of all social policy concerning d/Disabled in Finland. This is both in theory and praxis available to us as a society if we choose to allocate resources differently. In my own experience, because of the little that they have in today’s social reproduction, many d/Disabled persons are content with even the slightest improvement they receive from their surroundings because of the proportional enhancement to their living situations. This is the least the Finnish government could be doing, while also attempting to aim much, much further.

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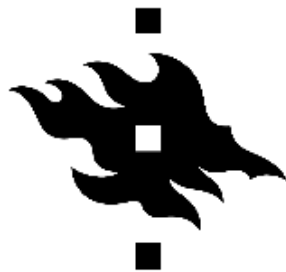
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