

Rampe? Reicht! Season 1 Episode 6: Is this discrimination or protest?

tier: ramp?

SR: enough!

tier: about 20 minutes podcast about..

SR: hmm, well today we're talking about my absolute favorite topic: interventions!

tier: yey! I'm excited! and I'm simo_tier, and I'm currently sitting at home and coming around to do a bit more household work as usual and sometimes I paint and draw stuff.

SR: I'm SchwarzRund and at the moment I'm totally bad in managing my household chores because I'm submit forgotten university tasks and papers.

tier: uuuh

SR: but actually I write books.

tier: well, yes today, as already announced, we'll be speaking about interventions and different forms of protests

SR: yeaah!

tier: and it makes a lot of sens to do so because we have the absolute expert on this topic with us here, (laughs) we don't have to invite anyone because you are it!

SR: it is very simple: there are only two experts in Germany on the subject. so one is really an expert and I am the other that wrote about it too (laughs)

tier: well, I think you may also call yourself "really an expert"

SR: all right.

tier: so the other real expert is sitting here, or over there because we are recording over skype but we see eachother!

SR: exactly

tier: (laughs) we wanted to start with me asking you a couple of questions, or you maybe have some suggestions for what you want to tell? what came to mind as a very topical thing is a temporal factor: as we are recording, it's around the end of april, early may, corona times, we're both sitting at home each by themselves and are in quarantine..

SR: in self-isolation

tier: in self-isolation, exactly, and the exciting thing is with these times that a lot of things that previously were impossible to do remotely, or over the internet from home, are suddenly possible!

SR: yes, yes, yes

tier: all disabled people go: "hmm"

SR: all disabled students who have dropped out of college are like: "oh really?"

tier: "oh that's also possible?" yes

SR: "oh online lessons?"

tier: "hmmmm"

SR: "hmmmm, who thought about that before?" (sarcasm) (both laugh)

tier: and people who for example would be able work from home, where it was said "no it definitely won't work, you have to come to the office." suddenly it works! and another thing from a disabled perspective, that's sometimes very difficult, and where I think we both experienced that we've been criticized for: that we do not participate in demonstrations, as we know the "right kind of activism" caution irony - is that we all run on the street very

fast and very far. (irony)

SR: yes, with prior registration, and only in a way that is coordinated

tier: laughs

SR: between two and four o'clock and..

tier: (drowns out SR with loud laughter) and haven't gone to any demonstrations for years with a very few exceptions, because they are just inaccessible and partly too dangerous. and all of a sudden, now there are demos online!

SR: yes.

tier: for example I read yesterday that now in June the Berlin CSD (Christopher Street Day, Berlin Pride) will also be an online thing..

SR: oh my god!

tier: some kind of online action will happen, so I wouldn't go to the CSD anyway ... (laughs)
probably not to the online thing either (laughs)

SR: then one should be offline that day and walk up and down the street (laughs)

tier: exactly!

SR: (laughs)

tier: Exactly, so maybe as an impetus, as this very normative form of intervention, the demonstration on the street with a thousand other people becomes very quickly a barrier thing, maybe you would like to say something about that?

SR: yes yes, definitely. exactly, I always don't like to say so much that something has to be "good" or "bad", I have to add. so now out .., not privately, that would be a lie, everyone who knows me also knows that, I actually mean on an analytical level.

tier: yes

SR: so my research the background is the so-called fields of intervention and the goal is not to say at the end "this is the good intervention, this is the bad intervention." that is what most people hope for generally. it's actually more about to understand a bit more why intervention? and to find out what the goal of the intervention is and to then look whether this goal is achieved. and to actually be relatively unbiased in it. If we were to look at demonstrations in general, for example, that would be relatively senseless, because demonstrations are held from very different objectives. and like you just said, and I definitely want to offend you now, because this is an intervention! (both laugh)

tier: yes!

SR: to say "they're so full of barriers and that's why it makes no sense" is totally problematic from an analytical perspective because an intervention, or rather something that's a disruption, as I actually prefer to say because that's easier to understand

tier: yes

SR: if I want to disturb something then I have to do something and what I'm doing has to have a disruptive effect. that means: in it we already see that it's a lot about "what's the result?" and very little about "what am I actually doing?" I have very little choice in what I do make. so that's always a little bit when westerners analyze that people set themselves on fire as a form of protest and say "ah, yes but you could have submitted a totally clever position paper instead!" or something like that. (both laugh)

SR: yes that's just "yes, it's a dictatorship and no one is listening, so I have to light myself on fire to be heard" and that's kind of the thing with demonstrations in general: I actually find it more exciting to talk about individual demonstrations. for example if we look at the refugee protests in berlin and the protests around the O-Platz, demonstrations were a totally meaningful means because everything else required other resources in order to enforce them. and it was simply about visibility. and demonstrations are totally, I mean physical demonstrations are a really good medium to create visibility: "hey here is a topic and we're bringing that on the streets" right? that's what people always say. and if that's just the goal. no changes in the law, no ... so if the goal of the demonstration isn't "we take it to the streets and that's why the law is changed", but: "we go on the street for people to start talking about the law" then you can also design the demonstration so that you achieve your goal and we're not all burned out because we are setting ourselves too big goals. if you do a demonstration for more .. for diversity in the queer scene, to organize a demonstration for that is quite a shitty idea. because first of all: who wants diversity at all in the queer scene? who benefits from diversity? who is endangered by diversity? who is endangered by forms of visibility? so for whom, visibility is something good and something bad? for whom is diversity as a concept something they want to write on banners and want to walk around with and who is it not? these are all questions that should come up. and then you'd find, "hey, that goal is totally nice for me as a white cis man who is abled, but the medium of a demonstration is pretty shitty for that, because

again only me and my ten Peter, Horst and Frank-friends will hang out there.

tier: yes

SR: which means that if I want more diversity in the scene, I should take a look at where I am taking up too much space, what kind of resources do I have, what are the clubs doing? So the queer venues, there are simply better forms of intervention for them, however based on this to say "oh because of this queer demo are demonstrations generally bad" doesn't actually really make much sense. and therefore I totally love this research field, because it allows me to discard my own prejudices and biases against forms of protest pretty quickly and to say "hey from my position demonstrations make no sense", but I can also say that because I'm able to sit here and write texts and I can get upset at the university and I can fill out petitions online because I have a German passport and so you notice what I mean?

tier: yes. yes, yes, totally! So the approach is .. you are pleading as an approach that people look first which forms of intervention or what kind of disruption would now fit this topic and what can I execute?

SR: yes, exactly

tier: yes that's very .. definitely a whole other .. hmm (both laugh)

SR: you thought I usually talk a lot about it and you already know everything and now you realize how much more I know about the subject (both laugh)

tier: that really changes a lot.

SR: right?

tier: definitely! so this too .. exactly, I think, I know my criticism of demos on the street was often: it is just so difficult from my point of view as a disabled person to participate because I can't run fast and then the danger with what's it called? ... that the cops use pepper spray which is a big danger for people who have asthma or other respiratory diseases for example, or people who take SSRI antidepressants.

SR: yes!

tier: this is actually a physical danger.

SR: exactly, yes of course.

tier: but the demonstration can nevertheless also take place even if I'm not going.

SR: exactly! and I think that's something that we hate to hear in disability discourses, because disability discourses are very .. it's very exciting if you compare how disability and interventions are debated in different countries and each country thinks it is the global answer and is totally detached from regional context. that sounds super theoretical, what I mean by that: in Germany we do not discuss barriers and access detached from the fact that we are in Germany. and in Germany we have through this movement around Klaus Hoffmann, who recently passed away, he introduced this culture for everyone, this doctrine, to politics in Germany, which says that culture has to be accessible for everyone. back then it was relatively radical to demand that. that's why we have all these tickets for disabled people, for Hartz IV recipients, and so on. that we have a lot of youth theater in Germany and countless hours etc .. so this incredible diversity of cultural accessibility. Of course there is still a lot to do, but still. if we compare it worldwide it's quite huge! and with this totally legitimate basic claim we join in discourses on disabilities and forms of protest. this "protest must be there for everyone", but that makes together with interventions, disturbances, and protest relatively little sense, because then it has to be something that is very compliant with the norm. because if we were to say now "okay we don't do demonstrations for the right of refugees anymore because that may exclude five white disabled persons", I say it so blatantly now

tier: (laughs) yes!

SR: it would be an absurd consequence, what would be the alternative to cause the same kind of disturbances? demonstrations are a disturbance of the infrastructure ultimately, right? so we have traffic, that's very important for capitalism, people have to go to work. and a demonstration disturbs this process physically in reality, or disrupts access to the parliament building, or, or, or .. then the only alternative with the same consequences would be.. because email floods are not the same as flooding with actual mail, to flood someone with letters, and even that has no effect these days

anymore. that's what we do the whole time. sometimes we do achieve that a deportation is postponed, I will also take part in that, I think that's important too, but we won't change the asylum law that way. we just have to accept that! which means: the only thing that can create such a widespread disruption to the system is hacking, i.e. computer hacking! and now the question is: is computer hacking more accessible to the general public and explicitly for the group that want to express itself? if you sit on the street as a refugee because you don't want to be in the housing which has been assigned to you, neither are you generally legalized, can you then take part in a cool hacking action?

tier: mmh, probably not.

SR: exactly! and I always wish for such discourses, but I notice that especially privileged disabled people make it very easy for themselves: "there is a barrier, that's why it is ableist, that's why I don't have to do anything but think about cool new designs for the disabled ID cards!" (sarcasm) (both laugh) and then everyone stays in their privileged protest bubble instead of seeing "okay, they are protesting in a way that is not accessible to me, but that's just because they have so damn little access" and if then, I'll say, a queer event says "yey, we're going out on the street for more diversity", that would be where we should criticize!

tier: yes

SR: and should say: "hang on! whether we're going on the streets now or in three months doesn't matter! you'd better take three months to check again if that makes sense at all." if refugees today, if there is a new law that concerns them and they have to protest in that exact week, only that makes sense!

tier: yes.

SR: that's kind of my field of research and I notice as a disabled person it is good to remember that again and again: it's not just about my approaches, there are many reasons why one experiences exclusions and all have right to disrupt and say "hey this really sucks!" (laughs)

tier: yes, definitely! that stimulates a lot! what comes to my mind is this when I look at it out of a disabled perspective and especially out of an activist perspective, or disability activist perspective, there were interventions by disabled people, which weren't demonstrations, but the disturbing actions were, I don't remember 100 percent, because my head is very much in the US history of this, what we're going to talk about later, but there was also in Germany, during the cripple-movement in the eighties these disruptions not through demonstrations but through the disruption of events.

SR: Exactly, that was totally common!

tier: because that fits now totally, exactly, somehow it makes me click with this where you meant the approaches! if now a public event takes place, this is in Germany mostly wheelchair accessible, then the activists could go there where politicians were talking and could then disturb on site.

SR: yes, and that was in the moment the most sensible form! and was that accessible to people with children? absolutely not. but it's exactly a difference whether you make an intervention or a protest moment inaccessible, or whether you make your general movement inaccessible and it's often equated

tier: true, yes

SR: and that is very difficult, because it is one of those a little, as I like to say, like "the intervention is the moment of crisis of a movement" in the sense of: you as a person, generally you are nice, generally you try not to be an asshole, but let's say today 15 bad things happened to you and then someone asks in the evening "can you help me with that?" your answer will probably turn out differently than on a good day. because you just have fewer resources because you are in the crisis right now. and that's kind of what happens to a movement! so if we now say: a community that is doing ok right now, and then there's a new law that makes everything deteriorate, then they are in a moment of crisis and crisis reactions in themselves are not particularly nice to other positions, or also not thinking about all the positions that are part of it, because it is a moment of crisis! and crisis means: resources were taken away from us. and it's difficult to judge communities only based on their crisis reactions. that doesn't mean that it all should never be discussed, please do it always! but

in the broad sense. Do you understand what I mean?

tier: yes definitely! I have to also think a lot about it, so it would be ideal that a group or a movement is practically trying to plan in advance how to act when a crisis comes?

SR: yes that would be perfect.

tier: maybe you want to say something about that, because I'm thinking of a concrete example, the Black Lives Matter movement in the USA, which is structured in a completely different way as what we're used to know.

SR: exactly! So they emerged in a crisis as grassroots movement and stayed in crisis too, because Black life is crisis! This is very important because Black Lives Matter did not start because suddenly someone was shot, but it was somehow the drop on a barrel that had been overflowing all the time so to say. and then they decided to write down several points as a manifest and these points are always getting more specific: which social groups should take over which roles. and one point is just the Black trans people are not only thought of, or should somehow also be part of the movement, but they have to take the leadership position. and with that the movement tried to ensure, whether it is successful or not would be the next moment, but the attempt is still totally exciting, to say: okay in the crisis we will lapse into power relations. we will again lift up the light skin cis guy who is academically educated, and so on. not migrated, blablabla, how can we then prevent us from doing so again, to wash down, what's that called in? to dilute?

tier: yes

SR: to the most accepted level of Blackness? which is cis and light skinned and abled and thin and academic and young and all that, and english speaking, quite important! english speaking! and I think that would be a thing I would wish to see a lot more of, not only nicely discussing about the next party, but "what do we actually do if ...?" it is never a cool question but it usually brings very exciting results. and the other thing is also: if we know that we choose forms of protest in crisis that are not accessible to everyone, we also know that not everyone can participate. but that also means that we then know that we can't measure the worth of activists on what, how and when they participate. and that would mean for example for the left movement to not longer think that the coolest protesters are the ones who go to demonstrations. that's just not accessible for everyone! and that's okay if it's not always accessible to everyone, because of capitalism and so on and so on, but that means it can't be the scale for qualifying as an activist!

tier: yes!

SR: and then we have to find other standards or standards let it be, but that would be quite.. (laughs) we are still a long way from that!

tier: wow, Thank you very much for these very compelling and intense impressions that you shared, I think that will teach many people like me quite a bit. I am very happy that we chose this topic and I think it will make sense to revisit it in the future, because this topic I realize is something that folk like me who are not at universities, are not academically educated, we can really learn from people like you who research this topic, or we can also learn from you how we can act better on our activism in the future. which should be the ideal when it's about academy and research

SR: (laughs)

tier: and I can't think of many other (laughs) things where I actually would be interested to sit down with an academic person and say: yes tell me! so thanks!

SR: no, definitely! I brought something with me, a small youtube video of a series that I really like to watch. it's called Drunk History and there are various spirits being consumed and afterwards famous people or half famous people try to re-tell history. and there is an episode that deals with the cripple movement in the states, we will link the video to you in the show notes. everything about this episode is great, because it's about a really important intervention in history, but what I actually want to address is how great it is cast! it's sooo funny! because the drunk telling is re-enacted by actors always in historical settings what is incredibly funny, and in this episode all the roles, even the role of of the not disabled, are played by disabled actors. so if you, like me, are very nerdy when it comes to disabled actors you will meet many familiar faces here again. including a great scene regarding some statements which are spoken by drunken English and are translated into ALS, the

american sign language and it's one of the funniest things i have ever seen!

tier: oh yes, this episode is awesome, and also regarding the content, this sit-in by disabled activists in san francisco in the actually in the office of the responsible government agent in the town hall for I don't remember how many days? over a month?

SR: yes!

tier: to change a law ...

SR: to get a signature for the form for the law change! animal: (laughs)

SR: that's that The most absurd thing about it: the law change was already finished, he just had to just countersign and that took years!

tier: yes! so this episode is a very good summary of this incredible intervention. very much recommended! now new on netflix is a longer documentary about what we'll probably talk about another time.

SR: yes, we'll most likely make an episode about the US-disability- movement

tier: exactly. So this documentary is called "Crip Camp" very, very greatly recommended, lots of hearts! it was amazing to watch! and it was very funny because you were watching this Drunk History episode and at the same time I was watching this documentary ..

SR: the short and the long form! (both laugh)

tier: now SchwarzRund has to watch the documentary so that we can talk about it! But that now as a small introduction to protest forms and interventions

SR: yes, and also, and maybe that's the one moment that connect so well to today's episode is: in the disability movement at that time a majority of the pepople were white, but also Black people where part in it and also veterans were included! and they were also organized within themselves, as the Black Panthers and the veteran movement. and it was probably not very easy, but ultimately they were there together, worked together on that they could can get the signature for this important legislation. and had disabled sex in the city hall, which I find important and right! (both laugh)

tier: yes!

SR: this episode was a bit longer today, probably even after editing, that's okay, it's an important subject! we're all just imagining that it was just 20 minutes long.

tier: exactly!

SR: Exactly, you can support us via patreon, that's at patreon.com/rampereicht

tier: and the next episode will be available in two weeks approximately

SR: yes... wait, why approximately?

tier: no, in two weeks, yes! (both laugh)

SR: everything is strictly observed here! you either learn about it on youtube, or also on social media. for instance you can find me everywhere as @SchwarzRund

tier: and you can find me almost everywhere as simo_tier, sometimes with an underscore behind it and yes .. we are:

SR: crazy

tier: disabled

SR: sick

tier: in self-isolation

SR: queer

tier: trans

SR: afro latin@

tier: migrated

SR: broke as fuck and sometimes things are going well

tier: and this podcast

SR: it is as well!