

Ramp? Enough! – Season 3 Episode 3: What is Crip Time?

Ramp? Enough! A 20-minute podcast about crip time.

tier: That means something like "cripple time". Yes, we will explain a little bit about how time and the passage of time feels different for disabled people.

SR: Exactly. I'm SchwarzRund and last semester I gave a seminar on the topic of temporality. So that's a very good fit.

tier: I'm simo_tier and yes, I actually deal with the topic a lot. What do you have time for or what do I have time for? And where, where will more time come from to get everything done, and so on.

SR: Right, right, right. So, I'd say the word of the day is crip time.

tier: Could you explain that in one sentence?

SR: Absolutely, I'm sometimes quite inflexible with spontaneous decisions because I'm running in crip time. And that means that I can't just do things differently, adapt them.

tier: That makes a lot of sense. Actually, this means that we disabled people deal with other time resources, but sometimes we also need different lengths of time or different short periods of time for things.

SR: And that things have to happen in a certain order. For example... I'll do it with a very concrete example. I had a big colloquium at my university, and they had a schedule. It was then kindly adapted for people who have to take a different way to university and so on. In itself a great thing. The problem is, I'm calculating in crip time. In other words, I had to plan that I would carry my luggage at the right time in order to be able to do the right things afterwards, to be in the Airbnb at the right time, to get dragging the luggage behind me before other things happened. I can't just decide to go to my Airbnb in the evening, because then I won't have any spoons left. You already know the word. Since I'm running in crip time, what would have taken maybe 30 minutes before (bringing luggage to the Airbnb) suddenly takes an hour, because I had to take a lot of breaks because of the pain. Exactly, how do you understand the term? Do you have an example from your everyday life?

tier: Definitely, since I use an electric wheelchair when I'm out and about, I always have the feeling that I have to incredibly rush. So, this is a personal problem of mine. I then also try to slow down a bit, but in general getting started, using this aid first of all, but then also several other aids for me and the dog, which also have to go with me, but then I have to plan everything. How do I get from A to B, since I also use public transport, and there, which we have already linked in the previous season. For example, this video, which is like a video game, how long does it take for the wheelchair user to somehow get to the pub versus his non-disabled girlfriend, who somehow manages all the stairs on foot, and he can't get any further because the elevator is broken. And so, exactly, [SR: Exactly.] that's just very real to me.

SR: Yes, crip time. So, it's also this knowledge that there are always unplanned barriers waiting for you, which will somehow swallow up time. Which is why we can plan for less flexibility in a day anyway, and simply fewer things. Exactly, we didn't come up with the term, unfortunately, that would be pretty cool. The term has a history, but today we don't want to talk about the term's history, but talk about a person who has done quite a lot of work on it. Her name is Alison Kafer, and the book is titled "Feminist, Queer, Crip."

tier: That sounds great.

SR: That's... That sounds pretty awesome, exactly. And there's a quote, I'll say it briefly in English and then you just translate it. "Rather than bend disabled bodies and minds to meet the clock, crip time bends the clock to meet disabled bodies and minds."

tier: So so to speak: Instead of adapting bodies and brains to the clock, so to speak, the watch adapts to the disabled bodies and brains.

SR: Exactly, and I think this quote is blatant, because yes, I don't know, so even the idea of time and temporality is somehow constructed, I think it's totally weird.

tier: Yes, that's really the next level, to think about it that way, because we're all very used to living in this after-the-clock-like way, and instead of thinking, instead of constantly running after the clock, to see, no, so in crip time it just takes so and so long, and I don't have to adapt to it, but time has to adapt to me.

SR: Exactly, and I think it's always natural to talk about when things aren't working for you, but I thought we'd turn that around a little bit today. [tier: Okay?] We are both organizers in one form or another. [SR: Yes?] So, me in the sense that I give workshops and you at the Queer Zinefest Berlin. [tier: Exactly.] How does this concept come into play in the context of, well, exactly, how does it shape your thinking and how does it also shape my thinking, yes, in relation to spaces where we have the power to shape them?

tier: For example, we have both already visited several Zinefests and often there was a z Zinefest, for example, which was somehow three days, every day it was open from somehow 9 or felt like 9, probably more like 10 am to 8 pm, absurdly long, where we also first of all did not participate at all with the times, so we were already at crip time ourselves, where we said, well, no, that's way too long for us and so on, and that's when I noticed myself as an organizing person, at the Queer Zinefest we had, I think, let's say, 7 hours of opening time and just noticed, with the feedback also from the people, who have sold their stuff, that it's just not worth it to do it for so long, especially that it's not worth it to open it so early. I think we kind of started at 11 am, and the next year we shortened the time from just 1 pm to 6 pm. That's... 5 hours? And we also have, well, I remember that we also talked about it, that we noticed that in that time, in the 5 hours, we sold just as many zines as in the 7 hours the year before.

SR: I'm definitely more persuasive for 5 hours than when I know I have to make sales for 13 hours.

tier: Exactly, that's exactly what it is. So, first of all, exactly, sitting there for several hours, and then nothing happens for long, or it just calms down... It's just extremely exhausting when you sit there all day.

SR: Yes, you're in such a wait-and-see attitude all the time, you have to be high energy all the time, but you can't give it anywhere.

tier: Exactly, quite a waste of spoons then.

SR: Yes, it's really quite a waste of resources. For me, for example, this comes into play with these longer workshops that I give. These are one-day workshops, which always last about 7 hours. This is often also because the sponsors demand that it be written on the label. I think it's good in itself, so I like to have more time, but I find an empowerment workshop that starts at 8:30 am a bit ridiculous in itself. [tier: Wow, rough.] Personally, I'm a bit disempowered when I have to be somewhere at 8:30 am.

tier: Oh God, then somehow also be fresh and receptive at this time.

SR: Exactly, and the fact that you're just saying that is great, because what kind of claim is that? So, because empowerment workshop doesn't say you have to be fresh and receptive. That's why I always do it in such a way that the first day is just an introductory day, for two hours and not at 8:30 am, and on the day that actually starts at 8:30 am, I always say from 8:30 am to 9:30 am or until 10 am there is breakfast and slow arrival, and then from 9:30 am to 10 am we check in again, and at 10 am the program starts.

tier: Yes, I think it's very different from what other people do in such a time frame.

SR: Exactly, for me it's just crap time, because for me as a workshop leader, it also means that I don't have to arrive completely ready. So, of course, I have to be there somehow, dressed, but I don't have to have managed to have breakfast beforehand, I don't have to have managed to drink something beforehand, I don't have to have managed to prepare the room beforehand, all these things. I can really take care of myself in the short morning time and I don't force anyone to be there at breakfast time.

tier: It's also empowering that the people who come there see this, okay, first we take the time to somehow wake up and arrive.

SR: Exactly, and for some people it's better at home because they still have kids. For others, this is better done locally, because they live in a stressful shared flat and are happy to have breakfast somewhere else.

tier: That's right. So, there was also a reduction of barriers for everyone, everyone got something out of it.

SR: Exactly, and that's crap time for me. This... Why does every time we are given always have to be used as it is written somewhere? Who's to say that it can't also be part of the empowerment part to ensure that people arrive together? Who says the person structuring it shouldn't get paid? Exactly, and I just refuse to do that a little bit.

tier: That's cool, that's a little intervention from within.

SR: Yes, totally. Just like Kafer says. No, this bending, pushing into place, I really like the picture. [tier: Totally.] Yes, and now, from my experience with temporality as a theme, so time as a concept. So, it's really exciting to see that actually all revolutions have always dealt with this question, right? So, if we look at the labor movement, why is there a six-day week with 12 hours? What is this concept of temporality? Towards this, right now, in the labor movement, why is there a five-day week and not a four-day week? What are these concepts of temporality in a changed world of work? Beyond the Black movement, which simply wants to abolish this separation of past/present/future. Decolonial movements coming from the indigenous direction, which say: There are also other concepts of time. [tier: Yes.] The feminist movement, which first dealt with the question in the universities: Hey, when was this second-gender idea actually developed and why? So, somehow, time plays a full role in resistance. And what I found most exciting was that it was a bit cumulative in the 80s, in this idea of Black gay time, so Black gay thoughts or Black queer thoughts. Because it's totally connected to the AIDS crisis. And I think that's important for us, for us queers, for us disabled queers, to also appreciate the fact that the AIDS crisis simply erased the future completely. But the future was... What was the future like back then? Marriage, eh? Having children. And if that's no longer there as the future, then you can live the present much more radically than what you are. So, the fact that Black gayness has been shown like this all at once comes in a very absurd way because the future has been taken away. Because if you don't have to hide for any future, right?... [tier: Exactly, yes.] Then you somehow become acceptable.

tier: Yes, no assimilation then.

SR: Exactly, you can be inexcusably yourself for the few years you have. So, as dramatic as that sounds, but that was the feeling.

tier: But exactly, that's what brings it together, really this queering time and crip time.

SR: Yes, and I think it's the same with crip time. Time simply has a different value for us, not a higher or lower one, simply a... [tier: Completely different...] completely different value.

Okay, so I've now told you a little bit about different origins, about, let's say, marginalized perspectives on time. [tier: Yes?] With all this, where do you feel that this is already happening in the queer movement, in the left-wing movement? And where is it still lacking to perceive crip time? And also in terms of authorities and applications and so on?

tier: The more I think about this concept, I really feel like there's so much more that needs to be done. I'm trying to think of some positive examples, but to be honest, I really can't think of anything. So, not to say that we somehow do this best, but just this, about our examples earlier, as you mentioned, authorities – just how absurd it is to always have to meet blatant deadlines, but the authorities themselves do not meet deadlines. [SR: Yes.] I recently received my new disability ID and the approval or reassessment of this... It took me two years to get that at all. [SR: Yes.] That's just this... to be kept in such a waiting position all the time. I've felt for years that I can't really arrive somehow, somewhere – or not somewhere, but in my life, because I'm constantly waiting for something, for some authority or some barrier reduction. And that's just what I hear a lot from other disabled people.

SR: I think you know in advance how painful the wait will be, that you don't even submit applications because of it.

tier: Oh yes, definitely.

SR: Yes. And also, I think what you can see in it, for example, I've been waiting for a letter for a year and a half. And I know that when the letter is there, I have to respond to it within a week or two. How should I organize assistance accordingly? [tier: Exactly.] Should I now pay for an assistant for three years so that they are available on the go for these very intensive one to two weeks then? How is this supposed to work?

tier: How is that supposed to work?

SR: It just doesn't add up. I feel like crip time is a bit like life is a jigsaw puzzle made up of pieces that don't fit together. And everybody's upset all the time and that you're not magically make it a working puzzle somehow, and you're like, "Well, but half of the puzzle pieces are torn, the other half belongs to a 3D puzzle, and that's a shoe. Who put the shoe here?" And doctors, authorities, sponsors are somehow standing around me and are like: "Hey, this can also fit together." It's a bit quirky.

tier: Yes. And do you have experience with what it's like to then negotiate crip time with non-disabled friends?

SR: Totally, that's one of my most memorable memories. I used to have the main diagnosis of depression. I would also doubt it now, like some of my diagnoses, but that's another topic. But well, at that time it was just somehow... at that time I was depressed. That's right. And as we all know, with depression, it can be difficult to get out of the house, to dare to leave the house, to leave on time, and so on and so forth. And I met up with a friend who is extremely neurotypical. And because of me, she had to wait 12 minutes at an S-Bahn station. Yes, she was white. And I had already texted her on the way with, "Hey, I'm coming, but please don't be angry, I didn't make it today because of the depression you know about. I really need not to get in trouble when I arrive, right? Because I'm already struggling to get on the S-Bahn, struggle to get on the bus, to endure Neukölln S-Bahn station and so on." And then I arrive and she shits on me for 10 minutes, that it doesn't matter why, that I still have to apologize first, because it's still somehow not okay and normal to be late. And that was like that for me, yes. But in crip time, 12 minutes late because of depression is not a single minute late.

tier: Exactly, I don't think so.

SR: It's almost too early, I think. So, I think I was an hour early, at least. And it was weird that I was there at all. [tier: Yes.] Exactly, so if anyone is 12 minutes late with depression and anxiety, I would say: "It's really nice to see you", or "Thank you for coming to see me", or "Yey, you did it", or "What do you need?", or "Should I come to meet you on the S-Bahn?"

tier: "Do you want me to pick you up?"

SR: "Shall we meet at your place instead of me and then try to go out together?" So, well, no, I would be perfectly aware that this meeting at, let's say, 4 pm probably requires the

person to have prepared for three days in advance in order to even make it there. [tier: Oh yes.] So that the two hours of coffee, which I somehow dogmatically insist on, are three days of time investment from my counterpart, because I think in terms of crip time. Exactly, I think that's what I encounter a lot with non-disabled people, that they don't understand my inflexibility and try to calm me down. So, thanks, but doesn't really change anything now.

tier: Crip time is still a thing.

SR: It's still harder for me to deal with the change now than it is for you. So, maybe another side effect that I think is important to name, that crip time also flows a bit into spoon theory for me. In the sense of, I can then adjust flexibly to change and I just don't have the spoons to take my meds in the evening. [tier: Exactly.] You know what I mean?

tier: Yes, yes, changing something or that something is being changed, to be able to be flexible, then eats so many spoons that then again, one's own life somehow suffers from it.

SR: Yes, flexibility as a claim is simply an ableist concept. [tier: Yes.] I'm sticking with it.

tier: Definitely, so I'm totally with you.

SR: I find another quote really exciting, may I share it with you?

tier: Yes, of course.

SR: Nice. Okay, as you all know, I'm researching Audre Lorde right now and I keep stumbling across sentences where I'm like, "Damn." The following is from an essay called "Man Child: A Black Lesbian Feminist's Response." And I first read it in English and then translate it:

"Frequently, when speaking with men and white women, I am reminded of how difficult and time-consuming it is to have to reinvent the pencil every time you want to send a message."

tier: Ah, that's awesome!

SR: [German translation]

What do you think?

tier: That's totally true, thank you, Audre Lorde, again for the absolute truths. But yes, really, this one... It eats up an incredible amount of time to have to have some kind of fundamental discussion with, let's say, various privileged groups. Well, that's why I have huge problems working in larger organizational groups or something. In one of the organizational groups where I work, I always insist on keeping everything very short and to the point, and so on, because it's just this, some plenary session with 1000 points, and then most of the others have no problems with the fact that the plenum is suddenly five hours long, because everything always has to be discussed repeatedly.

SR: Absolutely, for me it's exactly that sometimes when scheduling with people who aren't neurodivergent or disabled. You just think: yes, you can do that, but it's just completely pointless and shit. Well, of course we can meet for coffee to talk about it. But we can simply plan in advance what we want to talk about and then approach it in a structured way with

the people we are talking about. Something like that just shows me, yes, the person for whom an hour of sitting in a café is exactly one hour of time, and for me an hour in a café is simply four days of work. And I think that's where a calculation comes in for me: If the hour brings me as much as four days of other work, while the person only has to calculate, the one hour brings me as much as the one hour brings me.

tier: Exactly, that would be a plea to the non-disabled to maybe check in a little bit with the disabled friends, family members and so on. [SR: Colleagues...] "If we do this or that, how much time does it take for you?"

SR: Yes, and you'll be amazed.

tier: Exactly, really.

SR: Well, I'm also amazed by friends when I ask.

tier: Yes, I sometimes wonder about myself. I'm still, really, like I said, using a wheelchair for three years, and I'm still sometimes like, "Oh my God, that's how long it actually takes to be on the way." [SR: Yes.] And I'm still readjusting how early I actually have to leave.

SR: Absolutely, I think what Crip Time might also bring to the table is grief. [tier: Yes...] And my thesis is that we as a society no longer want to grieve together. And I think, first of all, it's a grieving with it: I just have less time to live because it takes me longer to put aids in my pockets. [tier: Yes. Yes.] But that also means grieving with relatives: "Oh, for you, the one hour of coffee time lasts four days together, that's pretty sad because it means we can see each other less often than I would like." But I think the trick is perhaps as a small, beautiful ending to the topic of crip time: grieving together usually brings you closer together, that creates actual closeness, exactly. So as an invitation to you: Just talk to people in your life and say: "Hey, if we do this thing together, what does that actually mean for you the days before and after?" Not in the sense of "Who wins the disability roulette?", but simply, it will be different on everything. [tier: Yes.] Nor is it the case that it is always more for the disabled person and less for the other. It's really totally different from person to person. You learn a lot more about each other. [tier: Yes.] I think that's what I think is the beauty of these conversations. [tier: Yes, full.] That you learn a lot about yourself, about life, about the other person. Exactly.

As always, we would like to thank very, very much everyone who listens or reads along or partly listens or partly reads the scripts. And we are looking forward to your mails and your financial support. And you can support us financially...

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SR: And you can also find us on Instagram as @rampereicht. Forgot to say that. [tier: That's right.]

Both: We're Mad, disabled, sick, queer, non-binary, migrated, Black – and so is this podcast.