

## **‘From alliance to trust’: constructing Crip-Queer intimacies**

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### **Abstract:**

*Yes, we fuck!* (2015) is a documentary that seeks to portray the sexuality of people with functional diversity that focuses on their empowerment and critiques ableism. Its filming has helped to generate alliances between Spanish activist groups, which have been named *Alianzas Tullido- Transfeministas* (Crip-Queer Alliances). Based on a research project that combined traditional and digital ethnography, this article reflects on how these crip-queer alliances have been constructed. First, we present a genealogy that contextualizes key events and explains their origins. Second, we analyse the construction process of the alliances, from queer to crip and vice versa, in order to reflect on the notions of intimacy that these alliances mobilize, while analysing their discourses and performances around the body, bonding, desire and sexuality. Finally, we explain the potential, as well as the difficulties and challenges, of these alliances. We conclude that they have followed their own situated process, where activists bring into play their bodies, emotions and intimacies and thus generate enormous potential for political action that questions ableism and heteropatriarchy

**Keywords:** disability, crip, queer, gender, sexuality, activism

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### **Introduction**

*Yes, we fuck!* (Centeno & De la Morena, 2015) is a Spanish documentary that seeks to portray the empowered sexuality of people with functional diversity, while questioning ableism. It consists of six stories with sexually explicit images that aim to challenge ideals of beauty, desirability and sexual practice. The selection of stories and characters could be a journey along the margins of Rubin's ‘charmed circle of sex’ (1984, p. 153): pornography, homosexuality, promiscuity, BDSM, group sex, paid sex, sex with manufactured objects and intergenerational sex. This is not a film that simply questions the prejudices associated with the sexuality of people who are traditionally named ‘disabled’, but also a confrontation with contemporary heteronormativity.

The very process of filming the documentary has encouraged alliances between activist groups that have been named ‘Alianzas Tullido-Transfeministas’ (‘Crip-Queer Alliances’). Queer activists have been working for years around issues of gender, sexuality and the body (Butler, 1993; Edelman, 2004; Esteban, 2009; Hennessy, 2000; Puar, 2007; among others). Crip refers to the participation of people with disabilities in this process (McRuer, 2006; Sandahl, 2003; Wood, 2014). Both crip and queer people have been and are still excluded and stigmatized. They have been constructed as the ‘other’, the different, the exotic, the monstrous ... the fruit of sin, meat for diagnosis. Hirschmann (2013) explains that the rejection of these collectives is generated not by hatred, but by fear. Capacity and sexuality are variables that can be transformed over the course of life and, thus, generate terror among the ‘normal’ because of the possibility of becoming ‘other.’

This shared oppression seems a clear stimulus for alliances. However, in Spain, until a few years ago, these groups had followed parallel paths with few encounters. Disability activists or, as we now call them, functional diversity activists, had focused on basic demands such as personal assistance, accessibility and inclusive education.

Recently, some of these activists have become concerned with the representation of their intimacy and sexuality. In the midst of the economic crisis and the decline of

social rights, they realize how easy it is to destroy their material achievements when they do not have equivalent symbolic value. In this sense, Spanish queer activists have emerged as their best ally: for more than a decade, they have been working politically around gender, the body and sexuality, as well as the (self) representation of these through postporn – a movement that encourages diverse sexual self-representations (Solá & Urko, 2013).

The spread of media technologies, and in particular, the popularization of social media, have been instrumental in generating a crip–queer alliance. The Spanish Independent Living Movement is articulated through a virtual community called ‘Foro de Vida Independiente’, founded in 2001. The decision to use the term ‘functional diversity’ took place online (Lobato & Romañach, 2003). Activism and relationships feed back into the ‘network publics’ theorized by boyd (2011). Likewise, crip-queer alliances develop between virtual and physical space: the call for activities is carried out almost exclusively via the internet, many discussions occur online and projects such as *Yes, we fuck!* were made possible through Crowdfunding. To collect these amounts of money would have been impossible without the support of a virtual community.

This article uses ethnographic data collected from the end of 2012 to the end of 2015 to reflect on how, from *Yes, we fuck!*, crip/queer alliances have been constructed, and on the influence of social media and digital technologies in this process. After a brief theoretical and methodological review, our analysis seeks to focus on three points. First, we construct a genealogy of crip-queer alliances that allows us to situate their key events and explain their origins. Second, we analyse the identity construction of queer regarding crip and vice versa, with the aim of reflecting on the notions of intimacy behind these alliances, and relating these to discourses and performances around the body, bonding, desire and sexuality. Third, we seek to identify the potential as well as the difficulties and challenges of crip-queer alliances. Finally, we highlight the main ideas and contributions of this article.

### **Theoretical framework**

Sexuality has been a paradigmatic area of oppression for people with functional diversity who have been placed in two equally stereotyped categories: oversexed perverts or asexual innocents (Brown, 1994, p. 125). However, these ‘personal and

individual dimensions of oppression' (Shakespeare, 1999, p. 54) have traditionally been relegated to the less urgent needs of disabled rights movements. Sexuality has been included exclusively in reproductive or sexual abuse prevention terms. As Tepper (2000, p. 283) states, there has been an unforgivable 'missing discourse of pleasure' when reflecting on the situation of people with functional diversity.

Feminist thinkers with functional diversity have been the first to amend this, by placing gender (and other variables such as sexuality and race) in dialogue with disability studies. Writers from Spain (Iglesias et al., 1998; Allué, 2003; Arnau, 2005; Balzola, 2002; Gimeno, 2006; Moscoso, 2009; Riu, 2005) and elsewhere (Begum, 1992; Corker & French, 1999; Fine & Asch, 1988; Garland-Thomson, 2002; Kafer, 2013; Morris, 1993, 1996; Samuels, 2002; Smith & Hutchison, 2004; Thomas, 1999; Wendell, 1996), have drawn on their own experiences to build this kind of analysis. This has led to what is called 'feminist disability studies.' Kafer explains:

Just as feminist theorists had questioned the naturalness of femininity, challenging essentialist assumptions about 'the' female body, I could question the naturalness of disability, challenging essentialist assumptions about 'the' disabled body. (2013, p. 14)

Another criticism of disability studies is constituted by crip theory (McRuer, 2006; Platero, 2013; Sandahl, 2003; Shildrick, 2009; Wood, 2014). In line with queer theory, crip theory aims at reappropriating the word 'crip' to deactivate its offensive connotation and, just as queer theory seeks to destabilize the gender binary and the very distinction between sex (nature) and gender (culture), it challenges able/ disabled, healthy/unhealthy binaries, as well as criticizing the distinction that disability studies has made between impairment (nature) and disability (culture). Both queer and crip categories are dynamic and remain open to fluctuations and transformations. Queer is not a simple replacement of gay or lesbian but refers to all identities and practices related to gender and/or sexuality beyond heteronormativity, such as sex work or BDSM. On the other hand, crip:

Has expanded to include not only those with physical impairments, but those with sensory or mental impairments as well. Though I have never heard a non-disabled person seriously claim to *be* crip (as heterosexuals have claimed to *be* queer), I would not be surprised by this practice. (Sandahl, 2003, p. 27)

Besides a theoretical affinity, the important connection between queer and crip groups is their common history of oppression. Unlike other groups who face discrimination, such as women or ethnic minorities, people with functional diversity and LGBT people suffer from ‘familiar isolation’: they usually have to grow up in environments where no one shares their experience (Sherry, 2004). The historical oppression of both groups has taken parallel trajectories. As Sandahl (2003, p. 26) explains:

both have been pathologized by medicine; demonized by religion; discriminated against in housing, employment, and education; stereotyped in representation; victimized by hate groups; and isolated socially, often in their families of origin.

However, it is not only oppression that connects these groups; they also share a history of protest and resistance (Guzmán & Platero, 2012, 2014; Preciado, 2008a). Both crip and queer theories nourish and depend on social activism. These activisms have created their own subcultures, situated at the margins of the system and critical of mainstream groups (the disabled rights movement and LGBT rights movement respectively), and resisting assimilation. Both crip and queer groups place the body and sexuality in the centre of their liberation struggle (Wilkerson, 2011).

At the same time, both use ‘anger and parody as political tools’ (Sherry, 2004, p. 774) in artistic practices, especially in the field of performance, in order to challenge and play with expectations about gender roles and disability. Indeed, the power of performance represented by crip and queer artists is to show that the categories of sex and gender, as well as capacity or functionality, are not rigid and indisputable, but are reproduced and performed daily.

Despite their shared oppressions LGBT and disabled rights movements tend to think about themselves as separate and consequently heterosexuality is assumed to be the norm in the disabled movement, as capacity is in the LGBT movement (Shakespeare, Gillespie-Sells, & Davies, 1996). The work that has been done in recent years has brought crip and queer into dialogue (Chen, 2012; Hillary, 2014; Kafer, 2013; McRuer, 2006; McRuer & Mollow, 2011; Shildrick, 2009; Sandahl, 2003) with the aim of de-essentializing the categories of heterosexuality and non-disabled, as well as highlighting

the relations between compulsory heterosexuality and compulsory able-bodiedness (McRuer, 2006). This line of research is emerging in the Spanish context where it is closely connected to activism (Centeno, 2014; Foro de Vida Independiente & Agencia de Asuntos Precarios Todas a Zien, 2012; García-Santesmases, 2014, 2016; Gimeno, 2006; González, 2005; Guzmán & Platero, 2012, 2014; Planella & Pie, 2012; Platero Méndez & Rosón Villena, 2012).

## **Methodologies**

This article is based on data collected between the end of 2012 and the end of 2015 and drawing on participant observation, in depth interviews, and virtual ethnography (Hine, 2000).

Participatory observation was developed as a result of the involvement of the first author in the *Yes, we fuck!* documentary project, carrying out social media management, counselling, and organising meetings and other events. This allowed us, from the very beginning, to participate and to obtain information that otherwise would have been impossible to access. Observation was developed mainly in Barcelona, as well as at specific events in Madrid and Zaragoza. In total, 50 records were generated, each one referring to an activity (talk, workshop, conference, film forum, party, or meeting) related to the project. These records fall into four categories: ‘disability’, ‘crip’, ‘queer’ and the ‘crip-queer’. For this article, we have paid special attention to the information contained in the final category, which contains 17 records.

To complement these observations, we conducted 25 interviews with activists that were involved in the crip-queer alliances. Among them are 13 crip activists who work, live or advocate around functional diversity spaces and 12 queer activists who focus their political struggle on sexual and gender dissidence. We carried out in-depth semistructured interviews from a flexible script. Twenty-one interviews were in person, one was conducted by telephone, and the other three via electronic delivery of the questions. With their consent and with the aim of making visible their voices and discourses, we have maintained either their real name or known activist nickname.

Internet and virtual spaces are increasingly important in today’s activism. Digital technologies and social media have played a central role in articulating the Spanish

Independent Living Movement. Likewise, crip/queer alliances have been established through an intensive use of ICT and virtual spaces. Given the advantages noted by other authors (Murthy, 2008) of the combination of physical and virtual ethnography, we extended our ethnography to virtual spaces, which have the advantage of automatic documentation as well. Accordingly, during this period, we monitored media and social network sites involved in discussions about sexuality and functional diversity in the Spanish context, as well as the virtual spaces used by those involved in crip/queer alliances. The following spaces have been analysed: The Facebook pages of Yes, we fuck!, Sex Assistant, Foro de Vida Independiente, Tandem Team, Actúa con tu diversidad funcional and Post-Op, as well as the blogs Mitologías de la sexualidad especial and Parole de queer, and the Tumblr and Vimeo of *Yes, we fuck!*.

### **Brief genealogy: from a documentary about ‘disabled’ to the emergence of crip-queer alliances**

The first story of the six that are included in the documentary *Yes, we fuck!* is about a postporn work- shop, which was held in Barcelona in April 2013 and organized by Post-Op, a queer group from the city. Postporn is a movement that seeks to promote self-representations of dissenting practices and corporealities (Preciado, 2008b). The call for the workshop was made online and spread through the social media of the groups involved. The encounter marked a turning point in the project, as well as in the activist groups and the lives of many of their 20 participants: 10 queer activists and 10 people with functional diversity. From there, a corporeal and political connection between crip and queer activists developed, positively feeding back into the process of producing *Yes, we fuck!*. Four of the documentary’s stories have as cocharacters queer people (two trans activists, a postporn collective and a sex worker who specializes in BDSM) who met during the process.

The official presentation of the documentary was held at the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid in 2015, within the queer-crip meeting. The presentation was a great success; more than 400 people attended the event, which also appeared on Spanish TV news. The second presentation, in Barcelona, was held within the Creative Commons Festival, at the CCCB Museum, again with more than 400 people and coverage in the local media. After that, the film was shown at national and international activist, academic

and filming events, winning prizes such as ‘best documentary’ at the Pornfilmfestival Berlin (2015), at the Fish And Chips International Erotic Film Festival Torino (2015), and at the FlixxFest Film Festival (2015), this last one online.

Regarding alliances beyond the documentary, the first project worth mentioning is Pornortopedia: a collaborative design project of sex toys promoted by Post-Op. This queer group, as a result of the workshop, realized that their postporn practices had ‘forgotten’ people with functional diversity and decided to amend that by asking for their input in order to design inclusive sex toys. The call was made online. In the same vein, Spanish queer activists began to include functional diversity in their reflections: from 2013 many workshops, meetings, texts and debates that place ‘crip’ at the centre of discussion were generated (for a detailed description of all the materials and events produced see García-Santesmases, 2016).

This process mainly occurred in Barcelona. However, some events took place in cities such as Madrid, Zaragoza and Bilbao where some fruitful crip-queer synergies were also emerging. For example, in Madrid, in the annual march for the visibility of functional diversity (Marcha por la Visibilidad de la Diversidad Funcional), some queer activists have participated since 2013. At the last (2015) Octubre Trans (Trans October) demonstration in Madrid, crip activists also attended.

One of the key elements that explain the articulation of these alliances is a belief in the importance of generating alternative models around bodies and sexualities. The fact that one of the directors of *Yes, we fuck!* was a crip activist eased this approach, together with other visual products generated such as *Nexos* (Post-Op, Centeno, Masson, & Carmona, 2014), the first crip-queer postporn video of the Spanish State. Its presentation at the 2014 edition of the Muestra Marrana (The Postporn Festival of Barcelona) was so successful that the following year another crip-queer group of activists created a new film called *Habitación* (*Room*, Navascués & Ortega, 2015) and won the award for best short film.

All these films have been designed and defined by their protagonists in a collaborative and horizontal manner, on the premise of ‘if you do not like the porn you see, DIY’. This is a political position that seeks to question capitalist logic and mainstream



pornography and defends the ownership and self-management of representations of sexuality. In the same vein, *En torno a la silla* (Around The Wheelchair) is a project to co-create products and accessibility objects for people with functional diversity, in ways which question the neoliberal logics that privatize knowledge and standardize productions (Sánchez Criado, Rodríguez-Giralt, & Mencaroni, 2016). Both videos and the products designed by *En torno a la silla*, argue that these offer other ways of being, sharing and relating intimately. In this way, technology, as well as public and virtual spaces, frames these relationships that constitute ‘mediated intimacies’ in the sense proposed by Chambers (2013, p. 164).

Parallel to the creation and dissemination of these projects, the Pic-nic Mutantes began in Barcelona. These gatherings sought to move ‘from alliance to trust’, that is from the theoretical and discursive to personal affinity. They took different forms such as workshops, film forums and parties and helped to generate connections between the activists involved, between 15 to 80 people depending on the event. On a personal level, they have gestated friendships and romances that bring theoretical alliance into embodied encounters. At an activist and artistic level, new projects have emerged, such as the film *Vivir y otras ficciones* (Jo Sol, 2016) and the photography project on postporn *No body*, both promoting critical representations around functional diversity and gender. Some Crip-Queer alliance can also be perceived at a professional level, since a significant number of queer people have started to show an interest in working as personal and/or sexual assistants for people with functional diversity.

In parallel, a crip-queer virtual community has emerged and started to create a narrative and common references. The Pic-nic Mutantes are organized through Facebook events that are disseminated by both collectives and individuals. These events tend to gather at least 60 people per event. However, the main space to share and disseminate crip/queer activities and information is the *Yes we fuck* Facebook page, which currently has more than 12.000 followers. This page is not limited to the activist alliances that occur in ‘real’ life, and most of the information comes from other sources, mostly international, which contextualizes the local process within a wider dynamic.

Other virtual platforms (Twitter, Tumblr, Vimeo, Youtube) have also been strategically used by *Yes,we fuck!* as each offers specific possibilities in the sense of ‘public

networks' raised by boyd (2011). While Facebook allows for the broadcasting of short messages to a wide audience, Tumblr has helped to address the thorny issue of disseminating personal testimonies. The possibility for anonymity has been key in this regard, for example, in the case of the person who self-identified as a devotee (a tag that refers to being sexually attracted to 'disabled' bodies) who refused to tell their story in another format. In this way, the project sought to provoke a 'coming out' around the sexuality of people with functional diversity, which was often evidenced through private messages on the Facebook page where people were asking contacts to flirt, as well as offering/demanding sexual assistance or sexual work, though *Yes, we fuck!* and the Facebook page were never planned as facilitators of such interactions. However, social media also obstructed the project, for example *Yes, we fuck!* public profiles, images and videos have been repeatedly censored on several platforms, and its explicit crip-queer postporn images are the reason why no Spanish television has dared to screen the documentary so far.

### **The construction of the crip-queer community in the spanish context**

Crip/queer alliances rest on a common reading that could be summarized as 'my body is not the problem; the problem is a normalizing society that oppresses differences.' From here, it seems logical that we ought to consider non-normative bodies that are denied desires, medicalized, confined or exoticized, and to draw a connection between those who have suffered for being categorized as 'disabled' and those who have suffered for being 'fat', 'trans', 'mad', 'dyke', 'faggot' and so on. This experience of stigma is the first common point that connects both activist groups.

The gatherings made many activists question themselves in terms of their own activism and allowed them to reflect on things that were naturalized – gender binaries in the case of crips and able/unable binaries in the case of queers. For example, one of the queer activists who participated in the postporn workshop began to reflect on her 'invisible disability' that she had never considered politically before. In this way the personal becomes political and the political becomes personal, since to meet and to share intimacy influences political discourses and practices and vice versa.

However, it is crucial to note that while the vast majority of activists involved in this process had not previously considered the potential of crip-queer alliance, this does not

mean that the groups were ‘unconnected’. On the contrary, as Lucas Platero, a queer activist and academic, explains in his interview: ‘it is not just the case of a group that comes together with another, people already are in the intersection (...) many have already been living that, for centuries.’ What is enormously innovative, at least locally, is the reading of this situation from an intersectional and critical perspective that understands and denounces the relations between ableism and heteropatriarchy and proposes joint alternatives (García-Santesmases, 2016).

**‘Transfeminism needs to reconsider its flesh’ (Lucrecia Masson, queer activist).**

### **Why queer are interested in crip**

For more than a decade Spanish queer activists have reflected on gender, the body and sexuality. This theoretical reflection has been accompanied by a practice of dissent, which attempts to construct alternative models around bodies and non-normative sexualities (Solá & Urko, 2013). However, despite the fact that queer discourse takes all stigmatised corporealities into account, in practice, activist meetings and performances, have mainly been attended by healthy, young, able people. The postporn workshop was experienced by queer activists as the realisation of a long-awaited desire:

It was like finally finding things that I politically saw very clearly. It was the first time that our bodies were in the same place. So it was something very strong and brought me full happiness (...) I felt like a Russian worker thinking ‘let’s arm the Soviets and overthrow the dictatorship.’ (Lucrecia Masson)

The workshop, and more generally the participation of crip people in alliance activities, allowed the queer activists to consolidate their political position. The introduction of functional diversity to their political work opened up a range of possibilities and enriching questions for them. To introduce bodies that function differently, with different mobilities and sensitivities, opens up the question of sexuality to a wider erotic. As Lucía Egaña explains:

It places you in front of your own limitations on how your desire is built: what turns you on, what doesn’t, what is beauty, what is not. It’s personal richness, and in the field of postporn means collective richness.

On a more personal level, the activists we interviewed explained how the crip-queer alliance process caused them to reflect on their own intimacies: how these were constructed and in relation to what norms. The desire to expand their ideas and experiences of sexuality was often mentioned in the interviews:

For a while that became a mechanical exercise, our way to fuck, and it was a little bit like relearning while rethinking other expectations: how do you fuck someone from the shoulders up? (Majo)

This rethinking of assumptions also led queer activists to a questioning of their own privileges as able-bodied, healthy, and vigorous. This became particularly obvious when thinking about the accessibility of spaces:

Suddenly you do realize how exclusive are all the spaces in which you participate and who is left out, either because architecturally it is not accessible, or because the assemblies are not in sign language or a thousand things because they are all spaces designed to be just for our bodies. (Kani)

To share intimacy raises awareness about the importance of accessible spaces for all corporealities. Thus, Spanish queer activists made a significant effort during this period to organize their events either in physically accessible spaces or to adapt spaces for the occasion. While physically inaccessible spaces and information barriers are obvious problems, considering functional diversity also opens up other interesting questions around the inclusion potential of activist spaces. From feminist debates about care and vulnerability, reflections on the ableist dynamics underlying assemblies and alternative spaces are produced.

That subject with the legitimacy of political thought and action is a white, heterosexual, slim, healthy, vigorous man, showing enough energy to take command. I feel we are questioning this man, suddenly, when we think about ourselves from vulnerability, not always vigorous, not always healthy and not always successful. (Lucrecia Masson)

**‘These people can help us to come out with joy’ (María Oliver, crip activist). Why crip are interested in queer**

Crip people took part in the crip/queer alliances mainly because they found them a space of listening, understanding and valuing. These alliances have led to many of them becoming more aware of their social discrimination. They described this process, and

the activities in which they took part, as 'liberating', and they saw themselves as empowered subjects with agency. Shakespeare et al. (1996) and Myers (2004, p. 255) have suggested that important parallels exist between coming out as a queer person and coming out as a person with an illness.

Crip people also found in queer activism a model of pride in difference that does not try to assimilate to 'normal'. This claiming of an outsider position, which bypasses victimization and frustration and focuses on joy and celebration has been one of the most attractive things for crip people:

There is something very festive in the celebration of this marginal status, as a powerful subversive act. It is not just that we do not bother that you see us how you do, but we celebrate that, and that's why I am interested in it. (María Oliver)

Their contact with queer activists also led the crip activists to rethink their desires and their ideas about gender and sexuality. This allowed them to express themselves as desirable beings, in a social environment that positively valued this expression instead of rejecting it or infantilizing them (Shakespeare, 1999).

At the far opposite end from the word 'sexual' we find the word 'disability' (...) Then, when Eros shows in people who were more related to Thanatos, with the disease, the dark, the damned, which has long been so, then ... Something happens. (Miriam Ballesi)

Moreover, crip-queer alliances helped them to position themselves as desirable beings that can be sexy and sexually appealing:

That was the best! The reaction of people after watching Nexos, the collective enthusiasm, the strength in which this arrived to what we wanted: to make visible functional diversity as something sexy, desirable and desired. The video achieved that: people got horny from seeing another way of being sexual. (Antonio Centeno)

This sexualization of their bodies and their performances has been useful for many crip activists to reconcile with themselves and with those parts of their bodies that were a source of embarrassment and pain. Spanish queer activism has worked on the visualization and eroticization of fat, trans, hairy, 'ugly' bodies that have been hidden (Post Op, 2013). For the world of functional diversity, to be aware of this possibility has

been enormously liberating and satisfying. For example, urinary incontinence has traditionally been traumatic for those who experience it, but was converted into a golden shower in the *Nexos* film. A participant in this film explains:

Many of us ignore the parts that we do not feel, but is also part of our body and we must learn to integrate it as part of it, it is not to hate that or see it as something ugly. (...) To me, Diana the *Pornoterrorist* enlightened me with this thing of peeing, getting dirty, not only men can do it! Or, for example a spasm, some people like that! (Patricia Carmona)

For the crip activists, contact with queer activism involved a reflection on gender and sexuality, both elements often considered natural and unchangeable. It caused many of them to widen their sexual imaginations and practices by having homosexual relationships or experimenting with sex toys or practices such as BDSM. Others noted that this had opened up a way to (re)connect with experiences and feelings beyond the rigidity of gender binaries:

My feminine side has been somewhat awakened. Hence the long hair, wearing ear rings again on occasions, speaking femininely. Yeah, well, it is not that it does not go with me or with my story, but yes, it had been long since I felt like now, as feminized. (Juande)

### **Crip/queer further intimacies**

In the Spanish context, crip/queer alliances have focused their political work on the body and sexuality, and on representing the self from a place of dissent and empowerment. However, intimacy has also been a challenging element, since to rethink sexuality and the body reformulates relationships and intimacy. Communities are not abstract and disembodied entities; they are composed of people who meet and interact. And those personal relationships are key to ensuring the success of political projects. The Pic-nic Mutantes, whose slogan is ‘from alliance to trust’, sought to strengthen both.

Their events were intentionally organized with the aim of promoting everyday meeting spaces and were successful at creating personal, affective, political, artistic and professional relations among the participants. Moreover, this alliance created a space of intimacy between different activist groups that involved a collective and political challenge to the very idea and practice of intimacy. For the crip activists, this intimate

contact made them realize that their exclusion from standard patterns of corporeality does not have to lead to their exclusion from sexuality and affection. It made possible contact with sex-affective queer communities that renounce monogamy, heterosexuality, public/private and male/ female dichotomies, and claim interdependence, mutual caring, cooperation networks, polyamory and degeneralization. They discovered the possibility of new intimacies. Antonio Centeno, a crip activist, describes the importance of this:

In a daily context that helps to connect the ways of living, the individual freedom and the sexuality, one has the intuition that you fuck as you live and you live as you fuck. (2014, p. 107)

In the crip-queer postporn films generated during this process, there is a constant representation of daily spaces and scenes of people with functional diversity, in line with the reading of DIY queer pornography made by McGlotten (2013, p. 122) – to raise its potential to bring ‘porn into life.’ This seeks to highlight and eroticize the human, physical and technological support which marks intimacy. The title for *Habitación (Room)* is significant because it takes place in the room of a woman with functional diversity and her daily orthotics become transformed into sex toys. Likewise, in *Nexos* an adapted auto- mobile and an accessible bathroom appear as sexual scenarios. Similarly, the project Pornortopedia draws on the erotic potential of prosthetics and orthotics.

Professional and personal ties between crip and queer activists also led the queer activists to question how one manages one’s own life, time, space and intimacy when this is determined by the need for daily support. Teo, a queer activist, reflected on his job as a personal assistant:

I am present, very close, in a, probably intimate, conversation, so that person has no longer intimacy. I can try to practice to look at infinity, to pretend I’m deaf, or to be very focused on how I cut the food, in my role, which is what gives me a place there, but I’m still present there.

This has also been a challenge for the theories and practices of sex-affective queer communities: how to reconcile networks of affection with care and the need for

personal assistance? How to build free and fluid relations and be respectful of the intimacy of others, when one faces the materiality of a body that urgently requires daily care? How to build relationships mediated by the presence of a third person, such as a personal assistant, or even a sexual assistant? These questions have not been answered but continue to stimulate mutual curiosity and the wish to keep encountering and discussing.

Projects about sexual assistance place intimacy in the foreground. In fact, the most important group that promotes this service in Spain is called Tandem Intimacy and advocates that, instead of using the words 'sexual assistance', 'intimate and erotic accompaniment' should be used. This topic is also the plot of the recent film *Vivir y otras ficciones* in which the protagonist, a quadriplegic man, organizes and negotiates his intimacy with his personal assistants, in order to have privacy in his relationships, as well as to organize sexual assistance services, which he promotes.

### **Challenges and divergences in the Crip-Queer community**

The crip-queer alliance has encountered difficulties as well as successes, and these pose challenges to its continuation and consolidation. First, we need to keep in mind that these are groups with different political trajectories, both locally and internationally. Contemporary queer activism is rooted in feminist activism, and even more so in the LGBT rights movement, which in Spain now has a high level of acceptance and influence in public policy, with historic achievements such as the approval of gay marriage in 2005. By contrast, crip activism is rooted in disability rights activism which is still in a phase of claiming basic rights, and their discourses are still largely anchored in a medical-rehabilitation paradigm (Palacios & Romañach, 2006).

The self-definition of these groups reflects perfectly the distance between the two groups. For example, debate about the term 'queer' is still alive and only some Spanish queer activists claim the English name, while others are committed to located interpretations such as *transmarikabollo* (Trujillo Barbadillo, 2005). The term 'crip' also comes from Anglo-Saxon literature, but in this case, those works have not been translated and are just starting to be part of the local academic debate on the subject (Platero, 2013). Consequently, its use responds more to an intentional analogy with queer than to the outcome of a process of empowerment and self-enunciation on the part of people with functional diversity. However, the term 'functional diversity' (which



itself has been gestated by local activism) is only used by those who identify with the discourse of the Foro de Vida Independiente.

The different degrees of politicization of the activist groups is not just a question of terminologies or quantities, but also involves one key distinction: the pride of difference

The issue of identity pride is much more developed among the queer, in fact, they are at a point where queer identity begins to dissolve while we have not even begun to build that from functional diversity. (Antonio Centeno, crip activist)

With regard to issues of gender and sexuality, the experiences of people with functional diversity has been depoliticized. Beyond pointing out the 'double discrimination' that weighs on women in this group, not much political work had been done. This has proved problematic in constructing shared crip-queer spaces. Sometimes queer activists noted patriarchal attitudes and behaviours among some crip activists (mostly heterosexual men), which in queer spaces are already overcome or, at least, are quickly detected:

Nor can there be a condescending role 'because of having a disability, they can do whatever they want,' and make a space inaccessible for others. Because, obviously, here some straight guys come and they never thought about that. (Lucía Egaña, queer activist)

In contrast, the queer world is hyperpoliticized. This can also lead to the construction of spaces in which not everyone feels welcome. Many activists with functional diversity do not feel recognized in the Crip- Queer alliances because they use a language and visual discourse (academic concepts, 'derogatory terms', sexually explicit images) that cause them confusion and fear:

Some people would die to be here, but they were afraid of being totally misplaced. In fact, I felt like 'I do not know what the hell I am doing here.' (Montse García, crip activist)

In the light of the lack of participation by people with functional diversity in some crip-queer activities, queer activists offered some self-criticism:

Sometimes we do not stand on planet Earth, we are in our micro world. Nor do we have this notion that you can get scared if the workshop is called Yes, we fuck! instead of calling it 'I can't wait to do it.' But people got scared. (Majo, queer activist)

In this regard, Thomas (2006, p. 183) has warned us of ‘the danger of tokenism’, that is, of ‘exclusion by nominal inclusion’ generated when disability remains in a politically correct discourse. In this sense, the different degrees of politicization involve the danger of a ‘queer appropriation’ of the alliance and of its objectives, rhythms and codes, without allowing people with functional diversity to choose their own path in their politicization process.

The crip-queer discourse is super cool, ‘we are all whores, dykes, black, crippled’, but no. We have to be careful and do not speak for the rest. (Kani, queer activist)

## **Conclusions**

Following Preciado (2015) ‘To fight for “sexual liberation” implies, therefore, a double job not only on practical emancipation but also discursive. A sexual revolution is always a transformation of the arche- types, images and stories that move the desire.’ In this sense, projects like Yes, we fuck! intend not only to make visible dissident sexuality but to generate a symbolic space where this is possible, thinkable, and desirable. In the same vein, the crip/queer alliances were generated from a documentary and constructed a political space and discourse, which was also physical and embodied one.

The alliances allowed functional diversity activists in Spain to be positioned as crip. This enabled them to understand that their exclusion from sexuality is neither fortuitous nor unique, but responds to a heteropatriarchal and ableist logic of normative sexuality. It has helped them to publicly display their intimacies and their bodies as beautiful and desirable. This process of corporeal and political empowerment is building a crip nascent pride that begins to depart from pity and paternalism. For this, postporn – a feminist and anticapitalist pornographic practice of representation, is emerging as an ideal weapon to demolish the foundations of heteronormative ableism.

In turn, thanks to these alliances, queer activists are renewing and extending their collective imagination, finding new challenges for their artistic works, their political projects, and their sexual practices. This encounter has meant a strengthening of their

intersectional discourse and, at the same time, a rethinking of certain assumptions and questioning of privileges.

Intimacy, like sexuality or gender, is a political device that is not limited to these two factors and therefore requires its own field of reflection and analysis. The crip-queer alliances that occurred in Spain did not focus on this aspect but have indirectly produced meanings and practices that construct (other) intimacies. The slogan of the Pic-nic Mutantes –‘from alliance to trust’ – is prescient in this regard, suggesting a movement from a theoretical and discursive affinity to an embodied encounter. Activists involved in the crip-queer alliances realized that this encounter did not happen ‘naturally’, as both groups socialize in different spaces, activities and rhythms. Therefore, they sought to construct a space of intimacy where all were welcome: a physically accessible space, respectful of gender and sexual diversity. The difficulties involved are seen as a challenge that these crip/queer alliances seem to be willing to face.

The virtual has been an indispensable tool and space for these alliances. It has facilitated contact between people who had never met but who, once they had, forged friendly relations, which were professional, affective, erotic, and so on. This has also allowed the spreading of information about international practices and helped local activists to feel part of a global community. The Internet has also served as a tool to counter the precarious means from which these activisms and individual activists suffer: most do not have a fixed source of income and many require care that is insufficiently covered so their possibilities for physical social interaction are quite restricted.

The affinity of crip and queer activism was theorized in the English-speaking world about a decade ago. In Spain, crip/queer alliances are more recent but have followed their own situated and embodied process. The activists involved have not only brought into play their political agenda, but their bodies, emotions and intimacies as well. This political, corporeal and emotional involvement has been encouraged by the shared feeling of living something historic – participating in the ‘somatic-political revolution’ in the words of Preciado (2013). This belief is enormously effective in terms of identity construction but carries the risk of individualized readings which obviate the collective memory of each movement. To trace a genealogy previous to the *Yes, we fuck!* project

is beyond the scope of this article; however, it is clear that talking about sex and functional diversity has been possible because previously we talked about dignity, human rights and equality. To be called crip is possible because functional diversity was already conceptualized and because others had named themselves ‘queer’, ‘mad’, ‘dykes’, ‘faggots’ or ‘fat’.

To see *Yes, we fuck!* as the beginning of the crip/queer alliances also runs the risk of considering crip and queer people as different and distinct groups, composed of individuals who only have in common a political project. However, there have always been people who inhabited the intersection of those oppressions and were aware of it (Platero, 2013). What is new here, at least locally, is a political reading of a situation that understands and denounces the relations between heteropatriarchy and ableism. What crip-queer alliances have contributed to this intersectional reality is a discursive framework of collective politicization which has named individual experiences that tended previously to be conceptualized as independent. What is not named does not exist, and what is named in a certain way, is constructed on that framework of possibility.

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