THE POLITICS OF DISABLEMENT & PRECARIOUS WORK

The Centrality of Disablement Subjectivation to the Reproduction of Capitalist Social Relations

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20
23

The wider project

1/3

Empirically-informed (interviews and diary entries of precarious workers in the UK - 'disabled' and/OR 'neurodivergent', 'chronically ill', 'experiencing mental distress', 'having impairments')
- new theoretical framework on disablement and work which is absent from Critical Political Economy;
- *here*, I propose the idea of 'disability composition' & offer a non-identitarian term for the technical composition of disability; disablement = structural feature of capitalism.

Contributions aimed at CPE, activist spaces, Disability Studies. Literatures - Autonomist, Feminist Marxism & post '68 Marxisms + social model lit.

PolEcon & PolSci have considered disability & disabled people through an individualising & depoliticised lens, if/when mentioned at all. In Disability Studies, Marxism has been largely abandoned.

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@DisPrecWork

Key considerations

2/3

I build on the *impaired - disabled dialectic* proposed by UPIAS*.

I argue that capitalism (not simply 'society') is disabling & influences understandings of identity, oppression, exploitation.

People with impairments, who are chronically ill, neurodivergent, D/deaf, neurodivergent are subjected to disablement.

*Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation

'Models' of (approaches to) disability

e.g. medical, cultural, liberal, postmodern, social, bio-psycho-social, posthuman, charity, tragedy (27-Withers 2012)

BUT - main distinction (via Mike Oliver 1990):

- individual model (regards 'problems' within individuals' bodyminds deemed necessary to 'fix')

- social model (emerged from UPIAS - the 'problem' lies in how society is organised); society disables people with impairments; 'disabled' = <u>political, social identity.</u>
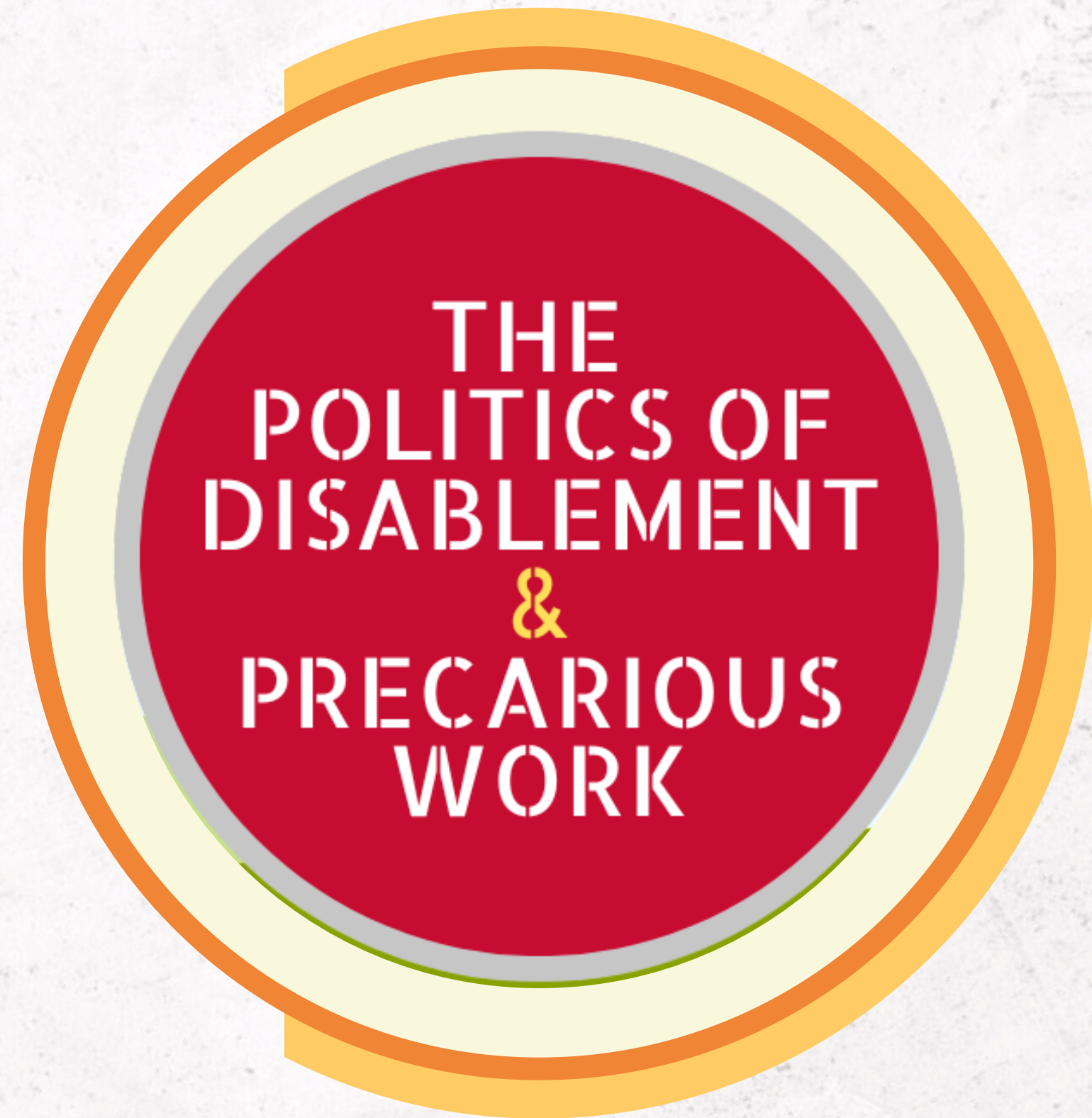
The social model's language has been appropriated over time (inc. by the state & liberal academics)

- I am following & retheorising the *UPIAS-inspired social model.*

Disability- & bodymind-related identities (1/6)

- 'disabled',
- 'neurodivergent',
- 'chronically ill',
- 'D/deaf',
- 'experiencing mental distress'
- 'having impairments'
- & the impaired – disabled dialectic

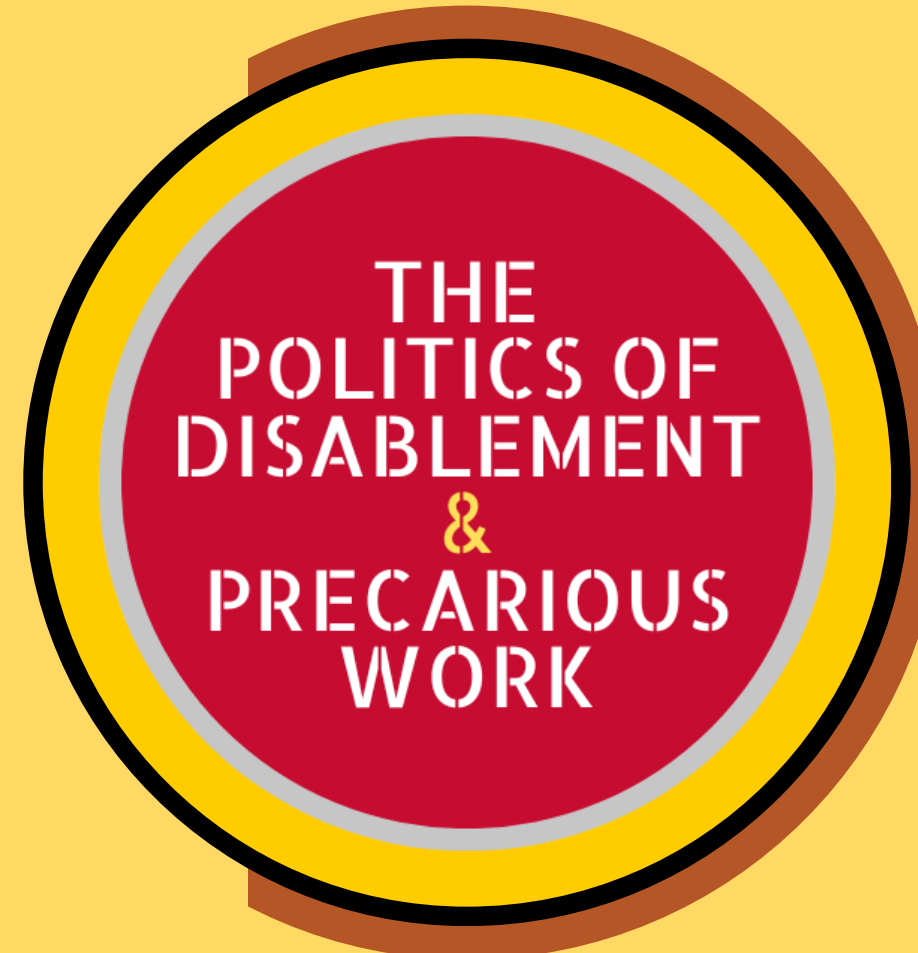THE POLITICS OF DISABLEMENT & PRECARIOUS WORK

Disagreements in society & literatures (1/5)

Rejection vs denial vs reservations

- Different interpretations of 'disability' & 'impairment' (via models);
- **Social modelists: 'disability' vs 'impairment' - BUT some activists: mental distress is not an impairment;**
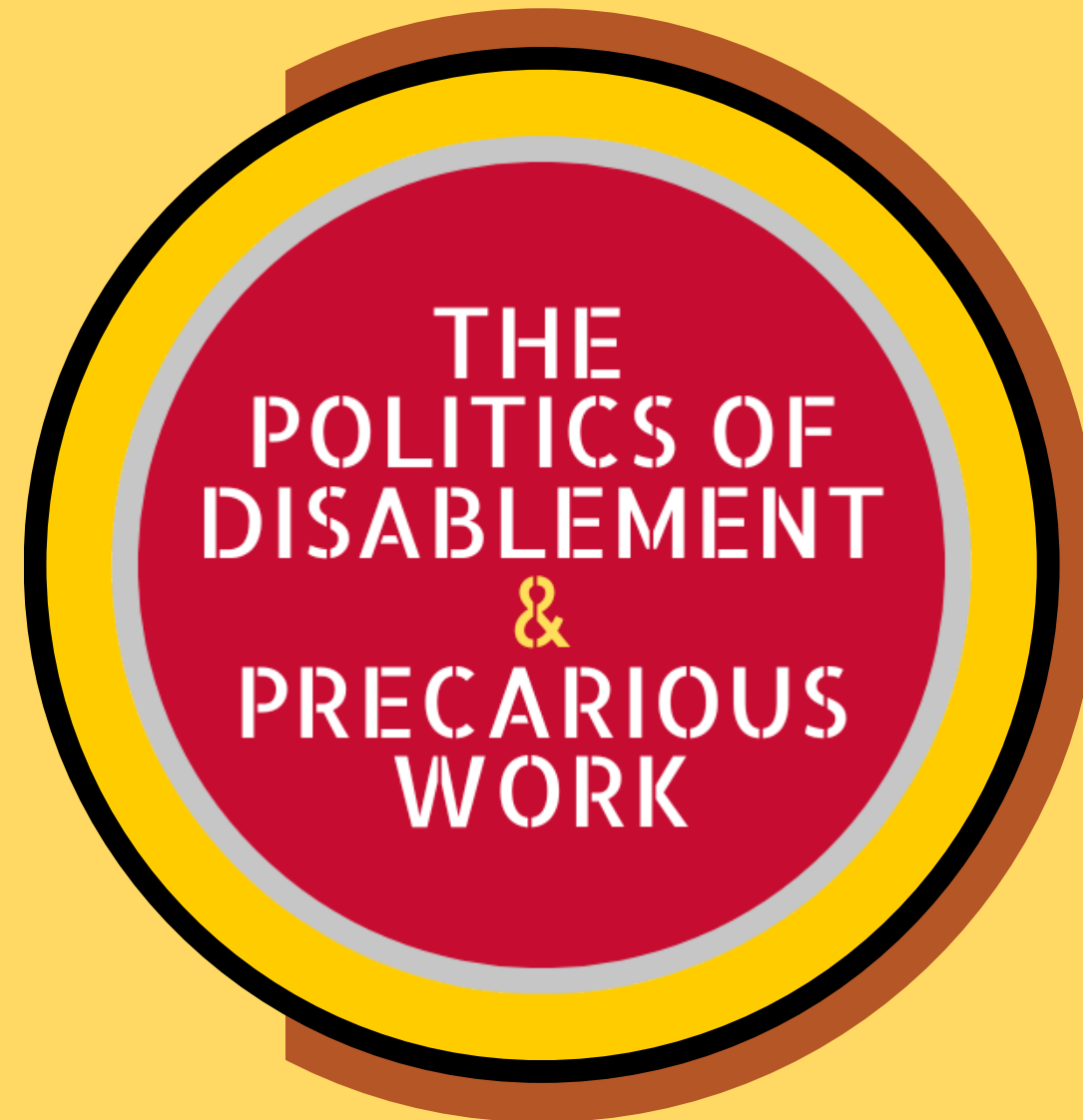
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- **In the UK, only 1/4 of those who are 'disabled' according to the law identify as such;**
- Some people's claims to disability are being denied by the state, employers, 'professionals.

General Disagreements in academia (2/5)

The language and concepts used are all over the place.

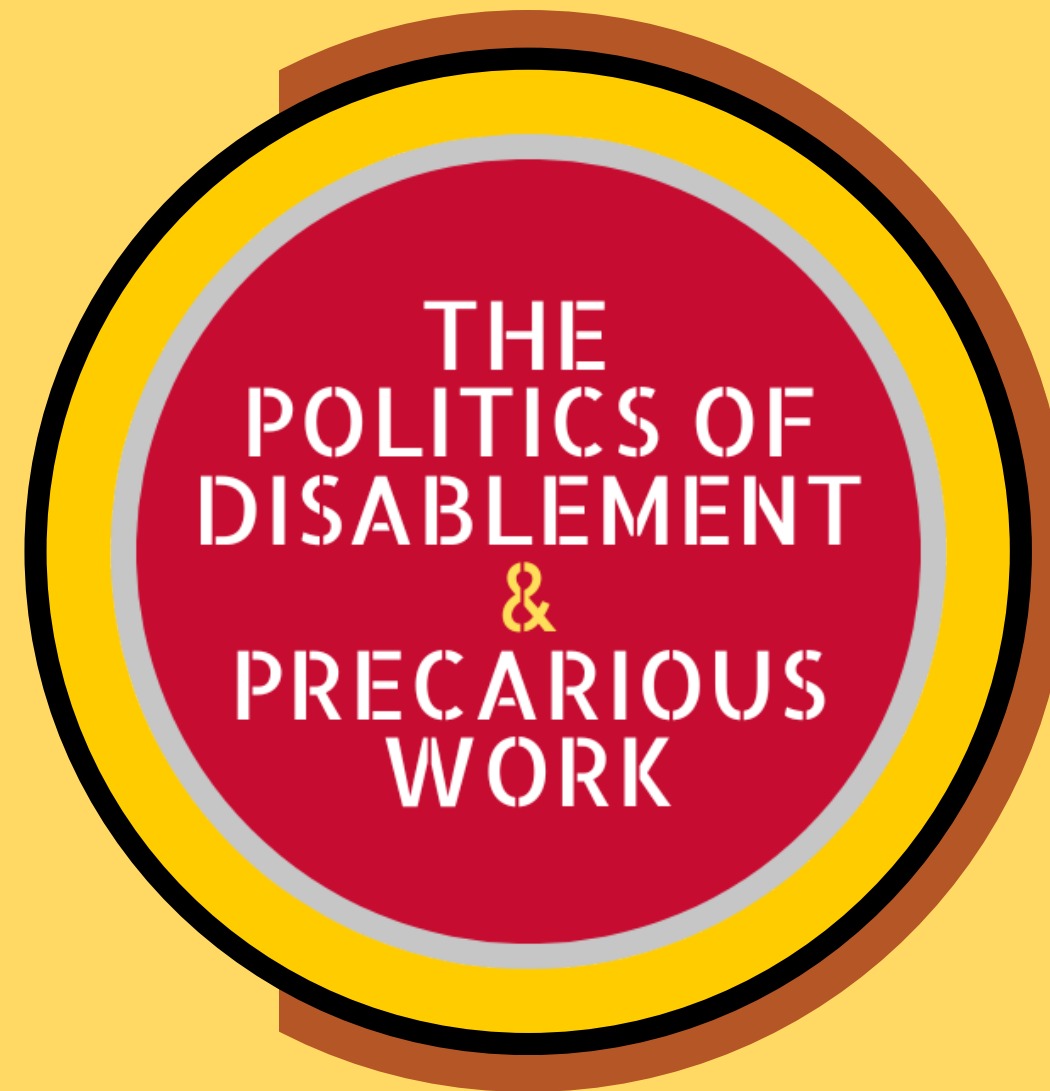**THE POLITICS OF DISABLEMENT & PRECARIOUS WORK**

Even now, identity questions on disability mailing lists can lead to dozens of heated responses.

Implications for activism (3/5)

Siloed self-organising can result in unnecessary divisions;

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A divided language inhibits coalitional politics;

Language matters for groups' constitutions and coalitional work.

Research participants' views (4/5)

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- 'Disabled' was used interchangeably with neurodivergence, chronic illness, mental distress; exclusively; or not at all;

- Some participants did not use the term 'disabled' due to not wishing to 'claim' the term away from others;

However, all participants presented evidence of disablement-related oppression and exploitation - common material conditions of everyday life.

Reasoning behind the search for a new concept: subjects of disablement (5/5)

- lack of consensus (everywhere);
- avoid long lists of different groups of people;
- avoid 'imposing' the term 'disabled';
- acknowledge the 'mental distress is not an impairment' argument;
- not everyone who has an impairment is aware of it;
- 'identity' = historically contingent concept - from mid-20thC, personal & social (Moran 2015);
- build on the (UPIAS-inspired) social model & combine it with recent Marxist work -> how disablement is produced & historically located.
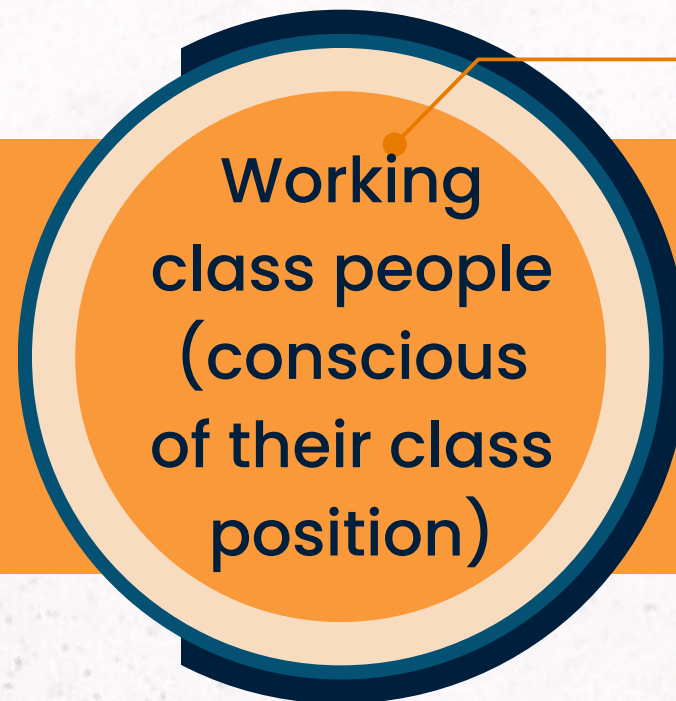
'Class consciousness' & 'Class composition' theories (1/4)

Class-in-itself

Working class people (exploited under capitalism)

Class-for-itself

Working class people (conscious of their class position)

attention on how to 'raise consciousness' - too psychologising & hierarchical

Technical composition

Working class people (exploited under capitalism)

Political composition

How working class people organise themselves politically

Mohandesi (2013)

'Disability consciousness' in the UPIAS-inspired social model (2/4)

Disability-in-itself

Disability-for-itself

People with impairments

Disabled people

conscious of the fact that they are disabled

12/14

My 'disability composition' proposal (3/4)

Technical composition (how people are materially constituted)

Political composition (how people organise themselves politically)

Subjects of disablement

neurodivergent, impaired, chronically ill, D/deaf, with experiences of mental distress, & other future identities/bodymind characteristics

Disabled people*

* and/or 'Mad', 'Crip' activism & other similar political groups

- how can *political* coalitions be built?
- what's the political difference between them?

13/14

Key points (4/4)

Subjects of disablement

- non-identitarian analytical concept - the 'technical composition' of disability;

- highlights <u>structural</u> subjectivation of different groups through disabling capitalism;

- open to / welcoming of future identities/groups (e.g. Long Covid; 'neurodivergence' = recent term)

- helps further the idea that disability (as a social formation) is a modality through which class is lived (cf. Hall et al. 1978).

Disablement [oppression & exploitation] is <u>**central**</u> to the reproduction of disabling capitalism.

Ultimate aim: the self-abolition of the collective identity 'disabled people' & mobilising against-and-beyond **disabling capitalism**.