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Misfit and Transformative Agency: An Integrative Review on Disability Perspectives for Sustainability Transformations

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Abstract

Despite growing attention to justice within sustainability transformations research, disability perspectives remain largely absent; the issue is predominantly approached through vulnerability. This review asks what existing disability scholarship reveals about transformative agency and how these insights critically expand prevailing understandings of transformative agency within just sustainability transformations. The review employs an integrative approach that brings humanities and social sciences into dialogue. The analysis of both datasets utilized reflexive thematic analysis to identify understandings of transformative agency of disabled people in relation to environmental, climate change and sustainability. Drawing on concepts 'misfit' and 'crip' the review synthesizes how agency emerges through the relationship between bodies and environments and how these relationships contribute to transformative change. The findings suggested that transformative agency from disability perspectives (GESD) that: (G) is grounded in the body and embedded in affects and emotions; (E) emerges through relationships among bodies, environments, infrastructures, more-than-human worlds, communities, and institutions; (S) is supported by alternative values and forms of knowledge; (D) develops as a continuum in which embodied experiences generate shared knowledge, collective practices, and ultimately structural change. Disability scholarship broadens conceptions of transformative agency offering new ways of understanding agency, change, and sustainability transformations.

1. Introduction

More than 75 years ago, two Finland-Swedish deafblind sisters, Elsa and Ester Nyman, who communicated through tactile sign language, were involved develop a solar-heated, emission-free sauna because they relied heavily on touch and a traditional wood-heated sauna was told to be unsafe for them (Yle Arena, 2015). This story is not only about accessibility or environmental innovation. It illustrates how disability can generate situated forms of knowledge that transform relationships between people and environments. From the perspective of misfit (Garland-Thomson, 2011), such knowledge emerges through the interaction between bodies and environments, particularly in situations where existing socio-material arrangements fail to accommodate diverse embodied needs. Yet, such knowledge and agency rarely featured in debates on sustainability transformations and transformative agency. Sustainability transformations are increasingly understood as fundamentally political processes that place questions of justice and injustice at their center (Scoones et al., 2020; IPBES, 2024; Avelino et al., 2024; Rodríguez et al., 2024). Within debates on environmental and social justice, agency has emerged as a defining concept, as just transformations depend on diverse actors' capacity to imagine and enact transformative change individually and collectively (Schürer et al., 2026). However, this also raises the question of whose understandings of agency inform theories of transformative change (Turnhout et al., 2026). This question becomes particularly important when engaging perspectives that have historically remained marginalized within sustainability transformations, including disability scholarship (Kosanic et al., 2023).

Disability scholarship has increasingly contributed to debates around environmental and climate justice (Jodoin et al., 2025; Kosanic et al., 2022). Research on environmental justice, climate adaptation, and

disaster risk reduction has often documented how climate change, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation disproportionately affect disabled people while compounding existing inequalities (Jodoin et al., 2020). At the same time, disability scholarship has highlighted the systematic exclusion of disabled people from environmental governance, climate policy and disaster planning, despite being among those most directly affected by these processes (Cooper et al., 2021; Stein et al., 2024; Wolbring et al., 2013). These contributions have exposed structural injustices and advanced calls for greater inclusion in environmental decision-making from local to international levels (Jodoin et al., 2025).

Alongside this growing concern of environmental injustice, scholarship at the intersection of disability studies, environmental humanities and social sciences has begun to show how disability reshapes understandings of nature, environmental justice, ecological futures, care, interdependence and human–environment relationships (Kafer 2013, Stein et al., 2024; Wolbring, 2012). Rather than treating disability as a condition of vulnerability, many authors have challenged the ableist assumptions that have long structured environmental thought, organizing, and action (so-called eco-ableism, Box 1) (Wolbring, 2013). These works started positioning disability as a source of environmental knowledge, alternative values and distinctive ways of relating to environments that can inform and inspire transformative change for sustainability. Drawing on concepts such as misfit and crip (Box 1), they have opened new possibilities for rethinking what it means, and what it implies, to contribute to transformative change from disability perspective. Yet, relatively little attention has been paid to these emerging understandings or how they might inform theories of transformative agency within sustainability transformations, As the agency of disabled people often remains secondary to discussions of vulnerability, participation and inclusion. This represents an important recognitional and epistemic justice issue. Furthermore, it is also a missed opportunity. Disability scholarship has developed rich insights, yet these insights are hard to find as they are scattered across the literature and have rarely been brought together to explore how they might broaden prevailing understandings of transformative agency.

To address these gaps, we asked two interrelated questions: (1) *What does existing scholarship reveal about how the agency of disabled people is understood in relation to environments and within environmental and climate-related discourses?* (2) *How does disability scholarship critically expand prevailing understandings of transformative agency for sustainability transformations?* We addressed these questions by conducting an integrative literature review that brings into dialogue scholarship from diverse approaches within the broad fields of disability studies, environmental humanities and social sciences.

We addressed these questions from our specific positionalities and not as neutral questions. Rather than striving for neutrality, we recognize that knowledge is always situated and relational (e.g. Caniglia, 2026, in review). This review was conducted by four authors, whose positions are not treated as bias, but as analytical resources for producing situated, critical, and transformative knowledge. Koivisto identifies as a deaf signer, Kärppä as a person with ADHD, Van Veldhoven as a trans-disabled individual living with chronic pain, and Caniglia as a non-disabled ally. We come from various fields of science—such as deaf studies, disability studies, sustainability science, philosophy, and environmental humanities—so our

approach is also multidisciplinary. In line with Deaf Studies field (e.g. Kusters, De Meulder & O'Brien, 2017; Koivisto, 2025), 'deaf ways of being' extend beyond research subjects to researchers' positions and theoretical frameworks. This perspective foregrounds the importance of understanding research as shaped by embodied, relational, and situated experiences. During the research process, we recognized that disabled researchers are underrepresented in academia, which reflects broader forms of epistemic and recognitional injustice. We argue that acknowledging positionality makes these structures visible and open to critique.

The structure of the paper is as follows. First, we present why transformative agency should be reconsidered from disability perspectives. We then move to the Methodology section, where we describe the review corpus, the literature review process, and the stages of analysis across two disciplinary traditions: the humanities and the social sciences. The Results section focuses on forms and understandings of agency identified in the literature. The Discussion section then integrates these findings and examines their implications for reconceptualizing transformative agency from disability perspectives through the GESD framework. Finally, we discuss limitations, positionality, and future research directions before concluding with the study's main findings and contributions.

In addition, we discuss the limitations of the study and future research directions. Finally, the Conclusion summarizes answers to the research questions, its key findings, and their implications for the field and future research.

Box 1

Basic terms used throughout the rest of the article.

Disability is a heterogeneous and evolving concept (Goodley, 2016). UNCRPD states that: “disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.” (United Nations, 2006).

Crip is a reclaimed and politicized term within critical disability and crip studies, derived from “cripple.” As a critical framework, crip foregrounds disability as a site of resistance, creativity, and alternative ways of being, knowing, and relating (Goodley, 2017). **Cripping** refers to challenging assumptions while generating alternative ways of understanding the world from disability perspectives.

Ableism refers to a system of beliefs, practices, and institutional arrangements that value certain bodies and minds as “normal,” “healthy,” or “productive,” while devaluing, marginalizing, or discriminating against those identified as disabled. It operates at multiple levels: structural (e.g., inaccessible environments), cultural (e.g., norms of independence, speed, or productivity), and interpersonal (e.g., stigma, stereotypes).

Eco-ableism refers to the ableist assumptions and ability expectations embedded in environmental thought, policy, and practice. Introduced by Gregor Wolbring (2012), the concept highlights how sustainability discourses often privilege bodies, minds, and ways of functioning while marginalizing disabled people and their knowledge. More broadly, it examines how assumptions about desirable abilities shape understandings of environmental problems, policies, and activism.

Misfit (Garland-Thomson, 2011) conceptualizes disability as a relational condition emerging through interactions between bodies and environments rather than as an individual characteristic. Misfit exposes how exclusion is produced through socio-environmental arrangements while also generating alternative perspectives and forms of knowledge from positions of embodied difference.

2. Rethinking transformative agency from disability perspectives

2.1 Why rethink transformative agency?

Agency has become a defining concept for understanding how transformative change emerges (Schürer et al., 2026). Recent scholarships have broadened the concept of transformative agency beyond individual action by emphasizing collective and relational, structural and institutional forms of agency (Rodríguez et al., 2024; Scoones et al., 2020). At the same time, transformative agency continues to be associated primarily with forms of action that are visible within transformative processes, such as mobilizing others, coordinating collective action, influencing institutions or articulating alternative futures (Schürer et al., 2026). These dimensions are essential, but they also shape assumptions about which forms of action, whose contributions and at what scales transformative agency becomes recognized.

Disability scholarship invites reconsidering these assumptions. For several decades, disability scholars have questioned dominant understandings of what counts as meaningful action, demonstrating how prevailing notions of competence, participation and contribution are shaped by ableist norms rather than representing universal characteristics of agency (Kafer, 2013; Wolbring, 2012). Wolbring's concept of *eco-ableism* has been central in illuminating this challenge (Wolbring, 2012) Applied to sustainability transformations, eco-ableism suggests that dominant understandings of transformative agency may privilege forms and ways of expressing agency. As a result, alternative expressions of agency have

remained invisible. Examples included agency grounded in care, interdependence, adaptation, communication, persistence or negotiating inaccessible environments, which rarely feature in discussions of transformative agency, despite their significance for social and environmental change. The challenge, therefore, is not to replace existing understandings of transformative agency, but to ask how disability perspectives might broaden them.

2.2 Alternative understandings: Cripping transformative agency for sustainability through misfit

Across disability studies, environmental humanities and related critical scholarship, agency is increasingly understood as relational, embodied and interdependent rather than residing within autonomous individuals (Garland-Thomson, 2011; Kafer, 2013). Agency emerges through relationships among bodies, environments, infrastructures, and care rather than through individual competence alone (Documacı, 2023). Similar developments appear in scholarship on everyday politics and social change, which demonstrates how ordinary practices can constitute meaningful political action. These include care, adaptation, persistence, emotional labor, and negotiating everyday environments (Niinivaara, 2022; Summers-Effler, 2002). These works highlight, for example, the importance of everyday practices through which people collectively sustain lives and reshape relationships with their environments.

Recognizing agency does not diminish the significance of structural inequalities; rather it highlights overlooked ways disabled people navigate injustice and challenges assumptions of unrestricted capacity or autonomy. Developing disability perspectives on transformative agency requires both critically challenging dominant assumptions and articulating forms of agency that existing concepts often fail to recognize. We approach this task through the notion of *cripping*, which disability scholars have developed as both a critical and a generative practice (Kafer, 2013; McRuer, 2006). On the critical side, cripping unsettles the normative assumptions through which concepts are produced and stabilized. Applied to transformative agency, this means to asking how prevailing understandings have been shaped by assumptions and norms.

The creative side of cripping is inspired by Garland-Thomson's (2011) concept of *misfit* (Box 1). Importantly, misfit is not only a concept for understanding exclusion. While misfitting reveals how marginalization is produced through body-environment relations, it also points to the epistemic possibilities these positions create. Garland-Thomson (2011) argues that the friction between body and environment generates distinctive forms of knowledge by exposing assumptions that remain largely invisible to those who fit. Misfit exemplifies the creative work of cripping by both critiquing dominant understandings and generating alternative ways of conceptualizing bodies, environments and transformative agency itself.

3. Methodology

3.1 Type of integrative literature review

Given the exploratory nature of this review, we adopted an integrative and critical review approach to examine transformative agency from disability perspective in environmental and climate contexts. An integrative review was considered appropriate because relevant scholarship is dispersed across different disciplinary traditions that rarely engage directly with one another (Whittemore et al., 2025). In particular, disability scholarship addressing environmental questions is found across both humanities and social sciences, which each tradition illuminating different dimensions of agency. The review is integrative in bringing into dialogue diverse disciplinary traditions from the humanities and from the social sciences (see Section 3.2 below). By integrating these perspectives, the review seeks to develop a broader understanding of agency than either tradition provides on its own. The review is also critical as it seeks to interrogate and overcome the assumptions and norms (e.g., ableism, eco-ableism) that shape how disability, environment, and agency are represented. Our focus on transformative agency reflects an intention to move beyond dominant portrayals of disabled people as passive recipients and to foreground their roles as knowledge holders and agents of change, and contributors to sustainability transformations.

We adopted a broad and differentiated approach to corpus construction. We distinguished between humanities-oriented and social-science-oriented contributions. The distinction is not categorical, but a heuristic one to maximize the sources we could rely on to understand the transformative agency of disabled people in relation to environmental issues. We treated the distinction as a heuristic rather than a disciplinary divide, enabling us to identify the distinctive contributions and overlaps between the two traditions.

Substantively, humanities-oriented contributions allow us to capture understandings of agency based on embodiment, emotions, narratives, values, ethics, imagination, and lived experience (Sorman et al., 2026), whereas social-science-oriented contributions more commonly focus on participation, institutions, governance, power relations, and collective action (Schürer, 2026).

3.2 Description of the corpus

The review consisted of two interconnected corpora: a humanities-oriented corpus and social-sciences-oriented corpus. Different corpus construction strategies were required because scholarship in these traditions are often disseminated through different publication formats. The humanities-oriented part of the corpus consisted primarily of monographs, edited volumes, and book chapters with a substantial focus on both disability and environmental issues. The social-science corpus was assembled through database searches and included conceptual and empirical articles as well as reviews, perspectives, and opinion pieces—which are often not included in reviews.

Across both corpora, our interest was not in analyzing publications as homogeneous units, so we identified and extracted passages that substantially engaged with disability-environment relations and agency.

3.3 Screening and analysis process

The review proceeded through three stages: (1) publication selection, (2) passage extraction, and (3) thematic analysis. Across both corpora the inclusion criterion in was substantial engagement with disability-environment relations and the identification of agency relevant to environmental and climate issues.

3.3.1 Screening: humanities and social sciences

The humanities corpus was compiled through the purposive selection of monographs by disabled scholars, including Eli Clare (2015), Alison Kafer (2013), and Sunaura Taylor monographs and single-authored books by disabled scholars, including Eli Clare (2015), Alison Kafer (2013), and Sunaura Taylor (2017), followed by snowball sampling to identify relevant edited volumes and book chapters. For single-authored books and edited volumes, only chapters substantially engaging with disability-environment relations were selected. Nine works were included in the analysis. Only passages containing explicit references to agency or dimensions of agency were extracted for analysis. From these works, 165 agency-related passages were extracted for coding and thematic analysis (Fig. 1).

For the social sciences, a search was conducted in the Web of Science Core Collection and Scopus databases, followed by snowball sampling to identify additional articles. Developing the search strategy required several iterations, since the term disability by itself risked overlooking relevant populations and communities, additional search strings were tested, including deaf. The final search strategy combined disability-related terms (e.g., blind, crip and ableism) with environmental terms such as climate, sustainability, and environment. This yielded 128 articles. Screening focused on concrete and tangible forms of agency. Attention was paid to experiences, actions, and forms of participation described by disabled people. Studies focusing on barriers or calling for inclusion without demonstrating concrete forms of agency were generally excluded. This led to 24 articles. From these articles, 204 agency-related passages were extracted for coding and thematic analysis. The number of extracted passages varied across articles, with some articles yielding several passages and others only one or two. These passages formed the primary analytical material.

3.3.2 Analysis: humanities and social sciences

Both datasets were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2019) six-phase reflexive thematic analysis to identify conceptions of agency. In the humanities dataset, contributing authors familiarized themselves with the material through closely reading texts, extracting passages relevant to agency. In the social sciences dataset, articles were screened and coded through close reading to examine research motivations, forms of agency, and approaches to disability and environmental questions.

Initial codes were generated and organized into preliminary themes, which were reviewed and refined through individual coding and collaborative workshops. The final analysis yielded three main themes, and seven subthemes in both corpora (Fig. 1).

The thematic analyses were initially developed separately and subsequently brought into dialogue. This integrative step enabled us to explore how complementary understandings of agency emerging from the humanities and social sciences collectively contribute to a broader conceptualization of transformative agency from disability perspectives.

4. Results

Table 1
The main themes, subthemes and key findings found for the humanities and the social sciences, as a result of the integrative literature review.

Fields/(sub)themes	Main themes	Subthemes and key findings
Humanities	**Embodied Ecologies**	Bodies: Reframing bodies as sites of valuable knowledge production through 1) inclusivity in environmental movements, 2) engaging with the parallel between oppression of the disabled human and the nonhuman, 3) acknowledging bodies and the environment as inherently interconnected.
		Emotions: Extending care and empathy beyond human exceptionalism and towards the more-than-human and the earth as a whole, through 1) sensuality and sensing differently, and 2) engaging with vulnerability.
	Crip Subjectivities	Identity: Reclaiming disability identity and reframing whose bodyminds are seen as "natural" by 1) recognizing the animality of the body and reconnecting disability with nature, 2) recognizing a plurality of disability identities and environmental experiences.
		Narratives and Futures: Narratives about the past and visions of the future as sites for transformation, through 1) engaging with disability history to shape identities, or critiquing existing narratives, 2) engaging with crip ecologies and disabled ways of knowing that support alternative, accessible futures and imaginaries.
	Socio-ecological Transformations	Values and Ethics: Challenging eco-ableist values that underpin dominant understandings of sustainability, through 1) articulating alternative value orientations based on community, vulnerability and entanglement, 2) connecting disability-based values to environmental ethics in order to reframe responsibility, capability and moral and political agency.
		Redesigning and Reframing: Rethinking design in terms of accessibility to nature, as well as accessibility to environmental actions, movements, and participation, while also reframing accessibility through the concept of universal design, the notion of affordances, and questioning what is seen as natural.
		Alliances and Coalitions: Building alliances and coalitions between communities and movements in order to create crip solidarity and combat ableist, exclusionary practices currently observed across activist groups and within organisations.
Social Sciences	**Individual Agency**	Adaptive and Anticipatory Practices: agency as a situated, forward-looking practice grounded in everyday survival, navigation and problem-solving.
		Embodied and Experiential Expertise: disabled, embodied knowledge and practices as situated expertise directly tied to action.

Fields/(sub)themes	Main themes	Subthemes and key findings
		Challenging Vulnerability: agency expressed not only through adaptation, but also through resistance and transformation. The misfit between the body and environment gives rise to a necessary creativity in people with disability – reshaping limiting environments and challenging dominant assumptions around vulnerability.
	Collective Agency	Interdependence and Survival: agency enacted through continuous interaction, reciprocity, and shared responsibility – especially in contexts where collective practices generate resources and stability in the absence of formal support systems.
		Disability-Led Action: agency born from shared resources and co-produced solutions between disability groups, as well as from the capacity to collectively reshape response systems and build alternative forms of governance.
	Structural Agency	Rights-Based Advocacy and Accountability: agency through contesting institutional exclusions and failures, social media activism, everyday activism and political mobilisation.
		Participation and Institutional Collaboration: agency extending to participation and collaboration with authorities, as well as beyond formal institutions into broader socio-political networks. Here, a shift occurs from marginal inclusion to active influence in governance processes.

4.1 Humanities literature

Humanities literature foregrounded embodiment, interdependency with environments, and the more-than-human relations. While interconnected, these themes clustered around three broader understandings of agency.

4.1.1: Embodied Ecologies Agency as embodied

Theme 1: Bodies

The literature moves away from viewing the body as a separate, individual entity. Whether this is done by making the disabled body part of a movement or community, or by practicing more radical value systems by embracing the more-than-human and the interdependency that comes with that, the literature critiques the dominant Western hyper-individualist view on the body. Moreover, disabled bodies themselves are put forward as sites of valuable knowledge production (Kim, 2017; Mitchell & Snyder, 2017; Dokumacı, 2023) demonstrating how this embodied knowledge could help in cripping eco-

activism, through non-normativity (Nocella et al., 2012; Taylor, 2017). The scholarship engages with this theme in three main ways.

Firstly, some literature discusses questions of access and inclusivity in relation to different bodies, both to the environmental movement and to nature (Taylor, 2017; Conrad, 2017; Ray, 2017). According to Taylor (2017), acknowledging different bodies, and their various ways of existing, could create a more inclusive environmental movement – benefitting both humans and the more-than-human. Secondly, the literature draws a parallel here between nature and disability through the notion of animality of the body (Colling, 2012; Taylor, 2017; Wheeler, 2017), which connects the contemporary ecological destruction and the view of the disabled body as animalistic, that is the oppression of both humans and nonhuman animals (Nocella et al., 2012; Taylor, 2017; Wheeler 2017). Thirdly, other works clearly conceptualize the body and the environment as deeply interconnected (Clare, 2015; Mitchell & Snyder, 2017; Voyles, 2017; Dokumacı, 2023). Here, the disabled body and the (disabled) environment are not seen as separate from one another, but as being in an inextricable relationship with one another (Dokumacı, 2023).

Theme 2: Emotions

Even though the theme of emotions is relatively broad, the main reframing the literature proposes in relation to environmental issues extends care and empathy beyond human exceptionalism and towards the nonhuman and the earth as a whole (Dokumacı, 2023). Scholarly works from the humanities cover a variety of emotions related to disability and the environment.

For example, Clare (2015) describes a longing for natural landscapes that no longer exist – in later sources also referred to as solastalgia (Bell et al., 2024). Another example can be found in sensuality, where sensing can invite alternative ways of moving through space and time, as well as non-exploitative and non-linear ways of existing with the environment (Kafer, 2013; Taylor, 2017). Sensuality and sensing can entail "*rather than conquering or overcoming nature [...] caressing it, gazing upon it, breathing with it*" (Kafer, 2013, p. 143). Recurring elements that are mentioned are embodied care, vulnerability, and empathy. Kim (2017) demonstrates that disabled embodied care practices relational ways of existing. Mitchell & Snyder (2017) support this by writing that vulnerability is central to disabled, embodied experiences informing these different ways of existing and crip ecologies. For this, alternative cognitions and epistemologies need to be embraced (Mitchell & Snyder, 2017; Schwartz & Konrad, 2024), such as the capacity for environmental empathy found in individuals with autism (Melchior Figueroa, 2017).

4.1.2: Crip Subjectivities: Agency through identity, self-definition, and future imaginaries

Theme 3: Identity

Disability identity is reclaimed and mobilized as a site of liberation, which emerges as a central foundation for agency in relation to nature and the environment (Clare, 2015; Taylor, 2017). Reclaiming disability identity implies a redefinition of disability as well as of environmental and more-than-human

identities beyond existing normative ways, to understand whose bodies and minds are considered “natural” (Kafer, 2013). In this sense, disability identity becomes is central to agency. Taylor (2017), for example, finds dignity in the disabled body through recognizing its animality, suggesting that reconnecting disability with nature can support the positive embrace of disabled identity. Similarly, drawing on recognitional justice, Melchior Figueroa (2017) argues for recognizing autistic environmental identities and epistemic agency by understanding autistic people as environmental subjects, advocates, and community members whose identities support both moral and political agency. More broadly, this literature calls for recognizing a plurality of disability identities and environmental experiences. Colling (2012), for example, conceptualizes eco-ability as seeking harmony in diversity. However, it is important to consider that not everyone has the privilege to engage in identity politics, particularly those living under conditions of oppression, poverty, and neocolonial violence (Dokumacı, 2023). So, while it’s possible, and necessary to question the vulnerability stereotype, not everyone has the privilege to view disability as social construct.

Theme 4: Narratives and Futures

Dominant narratives of nature, wilderness, activism, and possible futures often rely on ableistic assumptions of independence, productivity, bodily self-sufficiency, and normative bodily capacities (Kafer, 2013; Ray, 2017; Conrad, 2017). Here, the literature views narratives about the past and visions of the future as sites through which identities and ´possibilities for transformation are generated.

In terms of history, several authors emphasize the importance of recovering existing histories and narratives as well as creating new ones about disability and the environment. Clare (2015), for example, argues that knowledge of disability history is crucial for developing collective identity, pride, and self-definition: "*To arrive as self-defined people, disabled people [...] need a strong sense of identity. We need to know our history [...]*" (Clare, 2015, p. 106). Others focus on challenging dominant environmental narratives and histories. Kafer (2013) questions the historical assumptions embedded in ideals of wilderness, nature, restoration, and independence. Taylor (2017) and Ray (2017) critique “supercrip” narratives (cultural stereotypes of people “overcoming” their disability) for reproducing ableist ideals of self-reliance and bodily mastery. Dokumacı (2023) extends this critique by showing how a “habitus of ableism” becomes embedded in perception itself, shaping what is noticed, valued, and considered possible.

About futures and imaginaries, Kafer (2013) presents disability centrally “*as a site for collective reimagining*” (Kafer, 2013, p. 9), whereas Hall (2017) highlights the importance of José Medina’s concept of “resistant imagination” for confronting and realizing "*relational possibilities that have been lost, ignored, or that remain to be discovered or invented*" (Medina, 2012, p. 299). Dokumacı (2023) writes about “accessible futures” that are enacted in the present and which move from the constraints of the "as is" toward "What if?", "*bringing possible futures to life*" (Dokumacı, 2023. p. 9). Similarly, Mitchell and Snyder (2017) use the concept of crip ecologies to argue that disabled ways of inhabiting, knowing, and imagining the world can function as viable alternatives to dominant socio-ecological arrangements.

4.1.3: Socio-ecological Transformations: Agency in challenging norms and transforming socio-ecological relations

Theme 5: Values and Ethics

Many of the works rely on the critique of the ableistic values that underpin dominant understandings of sustainability and environmental relations, so-called eco-ableism (Wolbring, 2012). Kafer (2013, p. 131), for example, asks of wilderness experiences: "*whose values are these?*" highlighting the able-bodied assumptions embedded in environmental ideals of restoration and independence. Across the literature, alternative value orientations emerge from disabled bodies, affects, emotions, and lived experiences.

About challenging norms, the literature articulates alternative value orientations. For example, Taylor (2017), drawing on disability self-determination traditions, highlights values of "*interdependence, personal connection, [and] human community*" (Taylor, 2017, p. 145), extending them beyond the human to include relationships among humans, animals, and environments. Dokumacı (2023) supports this perspective by arguing that "*all lives are entangled*" (Dokumacı, 2023, p. 22) and that the disablement of humans cannot be separated from the disablement of other species, environments, and lifeworlds. Hall (2017) similarly argues that "cripping sustainability" requires valuing disability as a source of insight and recognizing instability, vulnerability, and dynamism as integral features of sustainable worlds. Clare (2017) links the valuing of disabled and chronically ill bodies to resistance against ecological and social monocultures.

Second, the literature that connects disability-based values to environmental ethics provides a different normative basis for relating to humans, other species, and the environment. For example, Conrad (2017) argues that recognizing disabled bodies and experiences requires "*the praxis of building an embodied relational environmental ethic*" (Conrad, 2017, p. 90), one that understands ethical responsibility as emerging through relationships among humans, non-human beings, and environments rather than through detached moral reasoning. For example, designing an urban park around disabled people's need for accessible routes can make visible how human well-being depends on relationships with trees, animals, infrastructures, and other people.

Theme 6: Redesigning and Reframing

Redesigning and reframing are social and political practices that shape who can participate in nature experiences and environmental movements. The theme of design is addressed first in relation to the accessibility of nature, and second to environmental actions, movements, and participation.

Regarding nature and accessibility, Kafer (2013) asks whether nature is for *every body* and emphasizes an apparent contradiction: disabled, equipment-assisted bodies are often positioned as both unnatural and yet inherently part of nature, even primal. This contradiction can restrict the opportunities available for disabled people to connect with nature. Simultaneously, accessible design and assistive

technologies may be excluded from nature experiences because they are not considered "natural" (Kafer, 2013). As Ray (2017) argues, it is often overlooked that non-disabled people also engage with wilderness through technologically mediated practices, yet this is not seen as inauthentic participation in nature experiences. Anderson et al. (2012) focus on the relationship between universal design (the creation of products and services accessible to all people) and sustainability, suggesting that the empowering outcomes of universal design can contribute to a more inclusive society for all, for example by improving access to recreation and leisure opportunities for people with disabilities. In terms of redesigning environmental action, Conrad (2017) reimagines eco-activism in ways that include fatigued bodies and calls for educating eco-activist communities on persistent fatigue, which could help build an embodied relational environmental ethic. Furthermore, Dokumacı (2023) frames redesigning as the creation of alternatives, emphasizing that environmental action should emerge from existing affordances rather than despite them, that is; from a standpoint of constraint rather than from an idealized notion of capacity.

Theme 7: Alliances and Coalitions

The literature elaborates on what alliances and coalitions could look like – reframing activism and values for cooperation in the process. In other words, “cripping” sustainability (Taylor, 2017). A recurring term here is “interdependence”, with various scholars arguing that interdependence is a necessary value to embrace and embody more inclusive and sustainable worlds (Duncan, 2012; Nocella, 2012a; Nocella, 2012b; Hirschmann, 2024). This interdependency is also referred to as “crip solidarity” in Johnson (2017). Overall, most works suggest a shift from agency on the individual level to forms of interdependent and relational agency, e.g., across groups, organizations, nonhuman animals, and ecosystems (Nocella, 2012b; Taylor 2017).

Firstly, the literature addresses the topic of alliances and coalitions in the context of shared injustices. A returning example here is the parallel between injustices towards people with disabilities and injustices towards nonhuman animals (Nocella et al., 2012; Taylor, 2017; Wheeler, 2017). A second angle to alliances and coalitions happens in the form of centering exclusion from certain groups or organizations in society. Here, it is explained and demonstrated how not engaging in alliances and cooperation can be disempowering, exclusionary and how this actively upholds ableism within environmental movements and other organizations (Nocella et al., 2012; Conrad, 2017; Johnson, 2017; Taylor, 2017; Hossain, 2024). For example, Conrad (2017) argues for environmental movements to engage with spoon theory – a method for metaphorically measuring one’s energy resources through spoons, making such movements more accessible to people with persistent fatigue and “less spoons” to spend on activism.

4.2 Social sciences literature

The social sciences literature highlights how disabled people engage with environmental and climate challenges; through individual actions, embodied experiences, and collective forms of organization. Taken together, these studies demonstrate how agency is constructed through interconnected individual, collective, and structural dimensions.

4.2.1: Individual Agency

Theme 1: Adaptive and Anticipatory Practices

This theme highlights how agency emerges through adaptive and anticipatory practices through which disabled people cope with, navigate, and plan for environmental challenges. Rather than being limited to deliberate goal-oriented action, agency is embedded in everyday embodied practices. Abbott and Porter (2013) and Lindsay and Yantzi (2014) highlight that the everyday lives of disabled people are characterized by continuous problem-solving and anticipatory action. They describe how disabled people systematically assess their environments, identify risks and develop strategies for managing inaccessible and unpredictable, or seasonally challenging environments, such as planning alternative routes in the event of a disaster or during snowy conditions. This anticipatory engagement is embedded in everyday life, involving sustained situational awareness, prioritization of limited resources and the capacity to rapidly adjust plans in response to changing circumstances, thus illustrating agency as a situated, forward-looking practice, grounded in everyday survival and navigation. In a Ugandan context, Kisira et al. (2023) further illustrate how anticipatory practices emerge through monitoring environmental cues, recognizing early warning signals, and developing protective and adaptive responses. For instance, disabled individuals actively learn to interpret subtle changes in their surroundings, anticipating potential disruptions and disasters and enabling them to act pre-emptively to reduce risk. As one participant explained, children are taught to recognize environmental warning signs and "*grow with a sense of being cautious but also know the urgency of passing on early warning information*" (Kisira et al., 2023). A similar argument emerges in the study of deaf people and communities in Vietnam by Cooper et al. (2021). They demonstrate how deaf individuals act as active risk assessors, using sensory awareness and prior experience to respond effectively to uncertain situations. This shows how agency can emerge through embodied judgement rather than external guidance. Taken together, these practices portray agency as continuously anticipatory and shaped by ongoing adjustment and learning, rather than merely reactive. In various environmental contexts, disabled individuals emerge as proactive navigators of uncertainty, continually developing strategies to manage risks and sustain daily life.

Theme 2: Embodied and Experiential Expertise

As the previous theme demonstrated, agency need not be understood solely through action or doing. This theme describes that agency is also grounded in embodied and experiential knowledge. Through bodies and diverse sensory experiences, forms of knowledge, ways of moving, and modes of engaging with environments emerge. From the perspective of misfit, bodies do not merely experience environments but also generate alternative ways of understanding, interpreting, and relating to them.

Drawing on the experiences of disabled people, Bell (2019; 2021) demonstrates how they develop forms of embodied expertise through everyday engagement with their environments. Focusing particularly on the experiences of people with visual impairments, Bell illustrates how environments are interpreted through touch, sound, movement, and other non-visual sensory cues. Rather than relying on conventional

ways of sensing and knowing, participants develop localized forms of knowledge that enable them to assess risks, navigate unfamiliar spaces, and interact with nature differently. In other words, people with disabilities develop knowledge relating to reading environments, assessing risks, and acting in situations where standardized solutions fail to accommodate diverse needs. Abbott and Porter (2013) observed that this kind of embodied expertise allows disabled individuals to navigate complex and uncertain environments in ways that challenge traditional notions of competence and capability. At the same time, everyday experiences shaped by bodily limitations offer alternative understandings of resource use, prioritization, and sustainability limits. Osborne (2023) expands dominant notions of rationality and efficiency. Living as a disabled person produces a heightened awareness of effort, energy levels and trade-offs, which informs everyday decision-making and adaptive practices. Experiences of navigating environmental illness, asthma, chemical sensitivities, and other chronic conditions can generate practica knowledge about using masks, detox herbs, and somatic practices. Rather than being marginal forms of knowledge, these embodied practices constitute situated expertise directly tied to action. They offer important insights into adaptation and resilience, especially during periods of crisis.

Theme 3: Challenging Vulnerability: Misfit and Alternative Rationalities

The theme of challenging vulnerability, misfit, and alternative rationalities highlights that agency also emerges through disabled people challenging normative assumptions and forms of eco-ableism. Rather than accepting vulnerability and limitations in action as individual characteristics, disabled people demonstrate how these are produced through relationships between bodies and environments. In doing so, they challenge dominant understandings of what constitutes valid, rational, or sustainable action. Agency is therefore expressed through adaptation, resistance, critique, and transformation.

Cooper et al. (2021) and Pirmasari & McQuaid (2023) demonstrate that alternative practices often arise in situations where accessibility is restricted, necessitating creativity, adaptability, and ongoing adjustment. These practices reveal how environments and systems can produce exclusion by positioning disability as a “misfit" between bodies and infrastructures, rather than viewing it as an individual “impairment”. A related critique emerges in the work of Abbott and Porter (2013), who highlight how many sustainability initiatives, including so-called "green" solutions, are based on normative assumptions that overlook the diverse needs and capacities of disabled people. This results in the reproduction of exclusionary practices under the guise of sustainability. Consequently, certain disability-related practices may be erroneously perceived as unsustainable, despite being essential for everyday survival and participation, such as using a car when public transportation is inaccessible, leading to the perception of disabled individuals as heavy users due to their disability. Bell (2021) also notes that visually impaired people actively challenge these assumptions by developing alternative ways of acting and relating to their environments. This reconfigures dominant understandings of what constitutes valid or sustainable practice. Sensory, situational, and non-linear modes of engagement open up new perspectives on human–environment relations and sustainability, thus expanding the boundaries of what is considered rational, efficient or valuable. Thus, individual agency is expressed not only through adaptation, but also through resistance and transformation. By reshaping and negotiating limiting

environments, disabled individuals redefine vulnerability, capability and sustainability as dependent on context and relationships, thereby demonstrating that agency is both practical and political.

4.2.2: Collective Agency

Theme 4: Interdependence and Survival

Mutual support is a form of agency. This does not simply mean that disabled people receive support from others; rather, they are also providers of support while simultaneously receiving it. Disability communities create networks through which they offer emotional and practical support, and collectively share knowledge, resources, and strategies for coping with everyday challenges and crises. Through these practices, agency emerges as relational and rooted in interdependence rather than individual action alone. As Cooper et al. (2021, 13) observe deaf communities in Vietnam, "d*eaf communities share and discuss the information they receive, offering advice and making decisions about how to respond to potential risks*." Beyond exchanging information, community members also actively shape it, as "*deaf community members develop messaging that is culturally and linguistically appropriate to their networks*." showing that interdependence is also evident in information sharing and collective decision-making. Deaf communities exchange information and guide responses to risk. Calgaro et al. (2021) discuss how the everyday lives of deaf people are shaped by mutual support and collective survival, particularly in contexts where institutional support is limited. In the deaf community in Australia, for instance, disaster risk reduction is frequently addressed within deaf networks and local communities, demonstrating that agency is inherently relational and distributed across social ties, rather than being solely individual. Strong social networks within deaf communities, for instance, provide emotional and practical support during crises. Kisira et al. (2023) wrote that self-help groups for disabled people serve as key sites of resource sharing and resilience building. Group members organize saving schemes and provide financial support, including short-term loans after disasters. This highlights how collective practices generate resources and stability in the absence of formal support systems. Similarly, in a Mexican context, Simpson et al. (2021) demonstrate that local communities also act as wider support networks in times of crisis, illustrating how agency is enacted through continuous interaction, reciprocity, and shared responsibility.

Theme 5: Disability-Led Action

Agency is also expressed through organized action aimed at addressing structural gaps and responding to crises. Disabled people organize themselves, develop solutions, and create support structures based on their embodied knowledge and lived experiences. This knowledge is transformed into collective action that supports not only disabled people themselves, but also broader communities. Through these practices, agency emerges as coordinated, solution-oriented, and grounded in disability-led forms of knowledge and expertise.

The all-deaf-research-group (Engelman et al., 2022) wrote about how the collective agency of disabled people emerges through strategic organization in order to address structural gaps. People with

disabilities support each other and develop solutions to crisis situations, positioning themselves as active organizers and coordinators rather than passive recipients of aid. For example, during the San Francisco Bay Area wildfires, disability groups coordinated complex programs and large-scale responses, such as distributing masks and air filters during wildfires and pandemics. In doing so, they supported both their own communities and other vulnerable groups. Bell et al. (2024) further demonstrate how disability-led climate movements such as Sisters of Frida and broader networks create mutual support structures that enable mobilization and political engagement, thereby demonstrating how agency can be scaled up from local practices to wider political engagement. At the local level, Maaninou (2020) shows how diverse actors are mobilized to develop context-specific solutions to environmental challenges. This illustrates how knowledge and action are co-produced across different actors and settings, rather than through the actions of individuals alone. Osborne (2023) discusses how community organizing and community-based support are particularly important in contexts where state support is absent or insufficient, reinforcing the importance of self-organized collective action. Thus, collective agency centers not only on shared resources and co-produced solutions, but also on the capacity to reshape response systems and build alternative forms of support and governance, such as Disabled Persons Organizations (DPOs).

4.2.3: Structural Agency

Theme 6: Rights-Based Advocacy and Accountability

Agency is also expressed through rights-based advocacy and demands for accountability. Because the rights, needs, and perspectives of disabled people are often overlooked in decision-making, policy processes, and environmental actions, their experiences do not always receive recognition or influence within formal institutions. As a result, disabled people challenge structural injustices, claim their rights, and seek to hold institutions accountable for their actions and omissions. In this context, agency extends beyond individual survival and community support into legal, political, and public forms of engagement. Jodoin et al. (2020) provide examples showing how rights-based advocacy and accountability include legal challenges and advocacy to address structural inequalities, making agency visible in contesting institutional exclusions and failures. Legal cases have highlighted failures to include persons with disabilities in emergency preparedness planning, as demonstrated by the Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled v. Bloomberg case, which led to a settlement in which the City of New York agreed to implement comprehensive improvements to disaster planning, including the involvement of disabled people. Stein et al. (2022) also provides examples of rights-based advocacy and demands for accountability. Sixteen young activists filed complaints to the United Nations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, arguing that states have failed to mitigate climate change and are thereby violating children’s rights, demonstrating how rights-based claims are mobilized to challenge state inaction. Individual litigation also includes a case in Austria challenging inadequate emission reductions, showing how personal experience is translated into legal action targeting systemic change. Tschakert et al. (2025) illustrate how agency operates through collective legal and political mobilization across contexts. In the United Kingdom, disability activists have challenged inadequate adaptation measures,

while in Australia, coalitions of young people, First Nations communities, and persons with disabilities argue that climate policies violate human rights. Similarly, as Jenks and Obringer (2020) demonstrate, disabled activists actively challenged plastic straw bans through campaigns such as *#SuckItAbleism*, arguing that sustainability initiatives can reproduce exclusion when accessibility needs are ignored.

Theme 7: Participation and Institutional Collaboration

Disabled people also develop strategies to advance their rights and strengthen their inclusion by building networks and partnerships with non-disabled actors, ranging from artists and community representatives to policymakers and public authorities. Through these collaborations, they gain greater access to governance structures and decision-making forums, thereby strengthening their opportunities to influence policy and contribute to broader social change.

Pertiwi et al. (2019) highlight how structural agency extends to participation and collaboration with authorities, marking a shift from marginal inclusion to active influence in governance processes. In Indonesia, disability organizations use their expertise, networks and data to transition from participation to partnership. This allows them to influence governance and gain access to decision-making arenas, thereby positioning themselves as knowledge producers and institutional actors. Calgaro et al. (2021) demonstrate that collaboration is evident in accessible emergency services such as Australia's Deaf Liaison Officer model, which increased visibility and ensured the inclusion of sign language interpretation. This model shows how experiential knowledge can inform institutional change. Engelman et al. (2022), Kisira et al. (2023), Maaninou (2020) and Simpson et al. (2021) show that DPOs also train authorities in inclusive disaster risk reduction. This demonstrates how agency can be enacted through knowledge transfer and capacity building. Jodoin et al. (2020) also show how participation can become institutionalized through advisory panels, enabling direct influence on policy. Pirmasari and McQuaid (2023) mention that alliance building extends to artists and community actors too, and Simpson et al. (2021) discuss influential local figures, showing that agency can extend beyond formal institutions into broader socio-political networks.

5. Discussion

5.1 Bringing Humanities and Social Sciences into Dialogue

Disability and environmental sustainability constitute a small but rapidly growing interdisciplinary research area. Our first question sought to understand what *existing scholarship reveals about understanding of the agency of disabled people in environmental and climate-related discourses.* The distinction between humanities and social sciences is analytically useful because the two traditions illuminate different dimensions of agency and transformative change. Clearly, the humanities and social sciences contribute complementary perspectives rather than competing ones. The humanities literature foregrounds embodiment, affects, values, and human–environment relations, while the social sciences literature focuses more explicitly on individual, collective, and structural dimensions of agency. Together

they provide a richer understanding of agency in environmental contexts than either tradition alone. Several complementarities stand out. First, both traditions understand the body as central to agency, although the humanities emphasize sensing, affect, and embodied experience, while the social sciences focus more on preparedness, adaptation, and risk assessment. Second, both traditions emphasize relationships and interdependence, although the humanities tend to approach agency as fundamentally relational, whereas the social sciences retain a stronger category of individual agency. Third, both traditions challenge dominant assumptions and forms of exclusion, whether through critiques of norms, narratives, and histories or through studies of resistance, advocacy, and collective action. Finally, both highlight the importance of communities, organizing, and shared forms of support in shaping environmental action and change.

Importantly, the boundary between the humanities and the social sciences is not rigid. Many publications bridge disciplinary boundaries and increasingly overlap around shared concerns with embodiment, interdependence, knowledge, and socio-environmental change. Bell's work (2019; 2021; 2024) illustrates this overlap by combing embodiment and human–environment relations with analysis of everyday practices, adaptation and environmental engagement. Such examples suggest that the distinction between the humanities and social sciences should be understood as an analytical tool rather than a rigid disciplinary divide.

Relying on their complementarities as well as on the increasing convergence of works from both sides, in the following section, we bring findings from the social sciences into dialogue with the humanities literature and explore what they suggest about transformative agency from disability perspectives.

5.2 An integrative approach: Reframing transformative agency from disability perspectives.

Our second question asked how disability scholarship critically expand prevailing understandings of transformative agency for sustainability transformations. To address it, we integrated the humanities and social science perspectives emerging from the themes and subthemes identified in the analysis (Table 1). Bringing these perspectives into dialogue, we contribute to debates on justice, sustainability, and transformation. Drawing on the themes and subthemes presented in Section 4, we propose the GESD framework (see Fig. 2) of transformative agency from disability perspectives. The framework suggests that transformative agency is Grounded (G) in embodied experiences, Emerging (E) through relationships between bodies and environments, Supported (S) by alternative values and forms of knowledge arising from these relationships, and Developing (D) into collective and structural transformation through shared knowledges and practices. The four propositions below elaborate each dimension of the framework. From disability perspective Transformative agency for sustainability from disability perspectives:

(G) ... *is grounded in the body and embedded in emotions.* Disabled bodies cultivate distinctive ways of sensing, caring and relating that bridge care from human relationships to the more-than-human world

and the environment. Affects themselves constitute important forms of agency and should extend beyond human exceptionalism.

(E) ... *emerges through relationships among bodies, environments, infrastructures, more-than-human worlds, communities, and institutions.* Interconnectedness and interdependence are central as agency is no longer understood as something possessed by individuals, but as emerging through interactions between bodies and environments.

(S) ... *is supported by alternative values and forms of knowledge*, most prominently interdependence, care, relationality, vulnerability, diversity, crip epistemologies and mutuality. These values support forms of knowledge that underpin alternative environmental ethics, narratives, imaginaries and ways of understanding human–environment relationships.

(D) ... *develops as a continuum, in which embodied experiences generate shared knowledge, collective practices and, ultimately, structural transformation.* Agency extends and unfolds across bodies, communities, organizations and institutions as well as through relationships with nonhuman animals and ecosystems. Structural impact and collective action are rooted back into embodied experience: individual encounters with bodies, environments and barriers become shared knowledge (crip epistemologies), which develops into collective understanding, mutual support, advocacy and institutional change.

5.3 Broader contributions to research on just sustainability transformations

The four propositions above illustrate the potential of cripping as a way of rethinking transformative agency. As shown in Section 2, cripping is simultaneously a critical and a creative practice (Kafer, 2013; McRuer, 2006). Critically, it unsettles the ableist assumptions through which transformative agency has traditionally been conceptualized. Creatively, through concepts such as misfit (Garland-Thomson, 2011), it generates alternative epistemologies by relocating knowledge and agency from autonomous individuals to the dynamic relationships between bodies, environments and socio-material arrangements. In doing so, cripping provides a concrete way of advancing the commitments to recognitional and epistemic justice that have become increasingly central within scholarship on just sustainability transformations (Rodríguez et al., 2024). It advances recognitional justice by broadening who is recognized as an agent of transformation, making visible forms of agency that are not limited to visible political action or institutional reform, but also involves changing how environments are understood, valued and inhabited through disability perspectives. More broadly, they seek to transform how disability and disabled people are perceived and valued, opening up alternative conceptions of agency. At the same time, it advances epistemic justice by recognizing disability as a source of knowledge capable of reshaping how sustainability transformations are understood and enacted (IPBES, 2024; Rodríguez et al., 2024).

Taking these commitments seriously also broadens how transformative change itself is understood. Rather than locating transformation at particular levels (for example enabling and restricting agency) the disability scholarship reviewed here suggests that transformative change emerges through the continuous interplay between bodies, environments, communities, infrastructures and institutions. Across both the humanities and the social sciences, embodied encounters with environmental possibilities and barriers generate situated forms of knowledge that become shared within communities, develop into collective practices and ultimately contribute to institutional and structural change. Conversely, institutions, governance arrangements and socio-material environments continually shape bodies, relationships, and possibilities for action.

This relational and multiscalar understanding provided by disability scholarship resonates with recent accounts of transformative change emerging from other marginalized groups and struggles (Rodríguez et al., 2024). It does so by showing how these interactions are experienced, negotiated, and transformed through embodied lives. In this sense, misfit (Garland-Thomson, 2011) demonstrates how the friction between bodies and environments simultaneously generates alternative ways of knowing, valuing and relating, thereby connecting embodied experience with collective organization, governance and structural transformation. Rather than separating the personal from the political, the embodied from the structural, or care from governance, disability perspectives reveal these dimensions as mutually constitutive, offering a richer understanding of how just sustainability transformations emerge and unfold.

6. Conclusion

This integrative review shows that disability scholarship conceptualizes agency in environmental and climate contexts as embodied and relational, emerging through disabled people's engagements with others and with their material environments. It also shows how such experiences can produce forms of knowledge and collective practice that contribute to broader processes of transformation. At the same time, the concrete agency of disabled people remains relatively underexamined. The relatively small number of publications and limited citation networks indicate that research at the intersection of disability, agency, and environmental sustainability remains emergent, calling for continued empirical, conceptual, and interdisciplinary work. This review focused on academic scholarship, yet important understandings of disability, agency, and environmental sustainability are also produced through disability activism, community organizations, artistic practice, blogs, and other forms of lived and experiential knowledge. Bringing these knowledge sources into dialogue with academic scholarship represents an important next step, particularly given this review's commitment to recognitional and epistemic justice.

The review also revealed a relative scarcity of empirical research grounded in the lived experiences of disabled people in relation to environmental and climate issues. Future research would therefore benefit from examining how disability, agency, and environmental sustainability are experienced, negotiated, and enacted in everyday life. Such research could strengthen and further develop the conceptualization of

transformative agency proposed in this review. Most publications originate from the Global North, particularly the United States, and are published in English. Within the humanities corpus especially, the literature is strongly shaped by U.S.-based scholarship. Limited attention is paid to coloniality, Global South contexts, intersectionality, gender, sexuality, and the diversity of disability experiences. Consequently, the understandings of transformative agency synthesized here remain partial rather than comprehensive.

These limitations also point to broader questions concerning knowledge production and researcher positionality. The underrepresentation of disabled scholars and disability perspectives within academia was evident both in the literature reviewed and in the wider research landscape. From this perspective, the issue is not only a matter of gaps in research topics or empirical materials, but also of whose experiences, perspectives, and interpretations shape the production of knowledge. Positionality is therefore not merely a methodological question but also an issue of epistemic justice. The findings of this review are shaped by the authors' own positionalities and reflect a conscious effort to foreground a crip approach to transformative agency. The relative invisibility of disabled scholars and disability perspectives within academia is likewise reflected in the literature reviewed here. For this reason, making positionalities visible was not simply a reflexive or methodological choice, but also part of advancing epistemic justice.

The starting point of this review was to examine transformative agency from disability perspectives and to move beyond dominant framings centered on barriers, exclusion, and vulnerability. Advancing epistemic justice **in sustainability transformation research** requires greater attention to how researchers' positionalities influence the formulation of research questions, the interpretation of data, and the construction of conceptualizations of agency. It also requires closer engagement with disability communities, experiential knowledge, and forms of participation that influence what is recognized as agency.

Disabled researchers' experiences and interpretations are particularly important in challenging assumptions about what counts as agency, valuable knowledge, or transformative change within research. The findings of this review suggest that disability scholarship does not merely add new actors or experiences to existing theories of transformation. Rather, it expands how transformative agency itself is understood by foregrounding embodiment, interdependence, disability knowledges, and relationships between bodies and environments. Further empirical and conceptual work is needed to develop and test these insights across diverse contexts. In this sense, a disability scholarship contributes not only to more inclusive sustainability transformations, but also to broader rethinking of what agency and transformation themselves can mean.

Declarations

Author Contribution

All authors contributed to different stages of the research process, participated in the preparation of the manuscript, and approved the final version.

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Figures

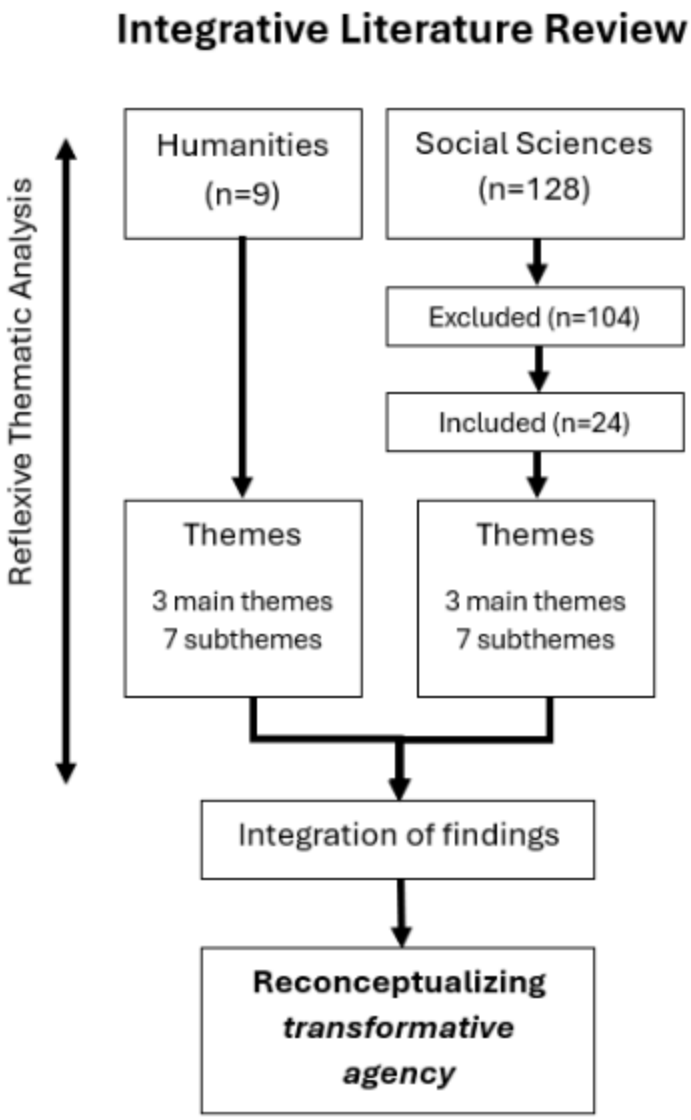


Figure 1

a schematic overview of the integrative literature review, containing the number of coded works (n=9 and n=24), and the number of themes and subthemes they yielded – three main themes and seven subthemes for both disciplines.

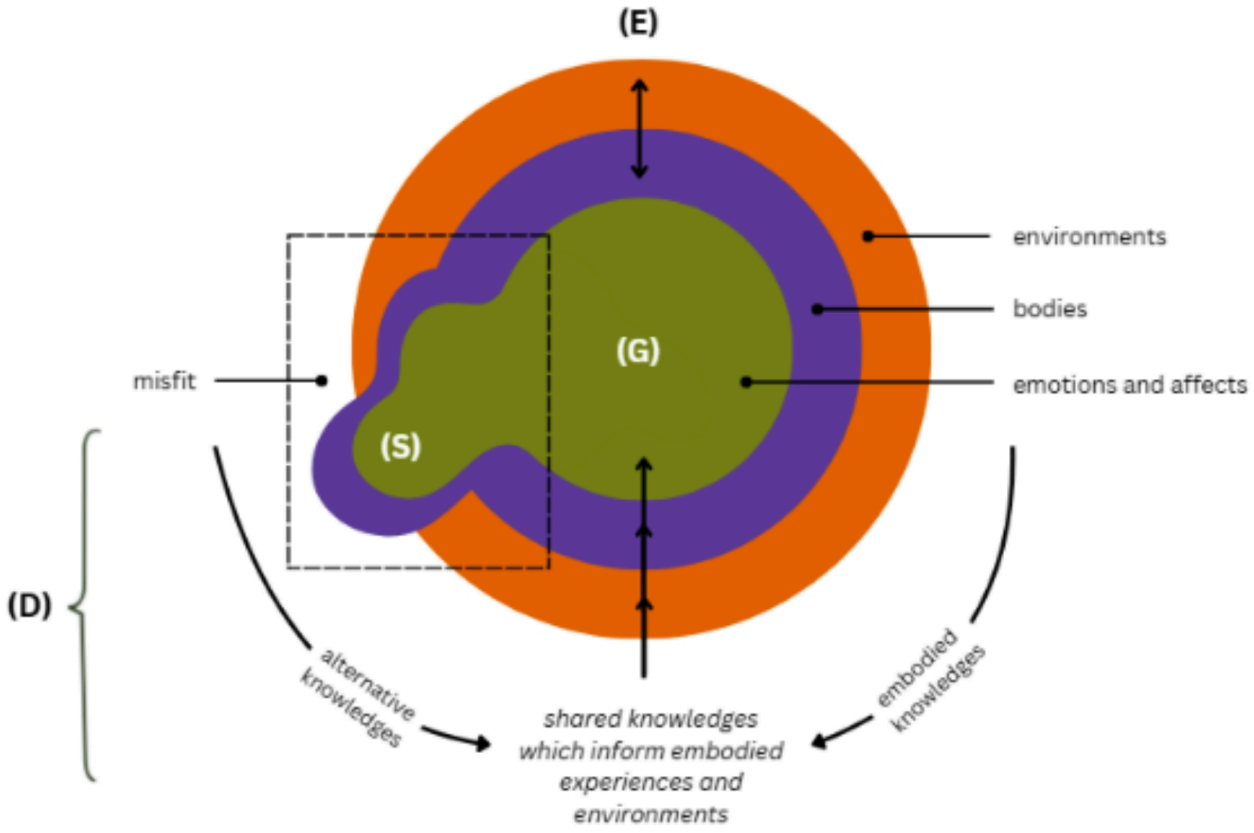


Figure 2

The figure depicts bodies and emotions as embedded in environments, yet also constantly in interaction with one another. The misfit represents embodied experiences which differ, or "misfit" environments, often leading to exclusions from socio-environmental arrangements. This, in turn, produces alternative embodied knowledges and ways of existing. These knowledges can – together with embodied knowledges produced from other body-environment relationships –create *shared* knowledges, which feed back into, and have the potential to change, existing embodied experiences and environments.