

Introduction¹

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The present publication is based on selected contributions for the 2012 conference ‘Gender Normativity and its Effects on Childhood and Adolescence’, which was held in cooperation between the association Intersex & Transgender Luxembourg and the University of Luxembourg.² The conference helped release synergies, an occurrence which is still unusual for not only Luxembourg, but also the spheres beyond it: the collaboration and joint discussion between people whose own biographical circumstances led them to engage with the conference topic, political activists aiming at establishing equal rights for all those who do not conform to the normative notions of a binary sex/gender order and at removing the taboos around their ways of life, and finally members of the scientific community who dedicate themselves to this subject in their research and teaching. During the exchange of innovative ideas and concepts regarding the subjects and topics related to ‘inter- and trans-sex/gender-related constitutiveness’,³ the aim was to avoid any hierarchizing speech about so-called affected persons by so-called professionals, and to strive for an equal exchange of all conference participants regardless of their sex/gender affiliation.

Around 200 attendees from various European countries (Belgium, Germany, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland, Great Britain), Canada and Cuba, as well as speakers from such diverse disciplines as biology, medicine, law, education, psychology, sociology and philosophy, made it possible to embark on a comprehensive and multi-faceted debate. The conference was met by considerable media interest, even far beyond the borders of Luxembourg. Following the event, a desire for a continued international exchange between

1 | Original version in German.

2 | URL: <http://idw-online.de/pages/de/attachmentdata18240.pdf> [21.12.2013].

3 | Instead of trans*, the German version of this publication uses the form trans' developed by the association Intersex & Transgender Luxembourg. In order to not to disturb the lecture and to avoid miss-understandings, trans' is not used in the English version and replaced by trans. Inter' is replaced by inter. The term of sex/gender-related constitutiveness will underline the assumption that all sexes, all genders are to be considered as results of ongoing processes of social constructions and developments. 'Inter- and trans-sex/gender-related constitutiveness' is an innovative translation for the German terms 'Intergeschlechtlichkeit' and 'Transgeschlechtlichkeit'.

speakers, researchers and interested persons remained. This led to the development of international and pluridisciplinary connections which also included parents' groups of trans children. Thus the present publication can serve as a landmark for raising further awareness of issues of inter- and trans-sex/gender-related constitutiveness within scientific and public debates.

What is particularly remarkable about the conference is its focus on the life situations of children and adolescents, whose subjective self-attributions of sex and gender do not conform to the binary normative sex/gender matrix, but who live – are forced to live – lives that are strongly delimited, and often even constricted, by this very matrix. This indicates a more comprehensive perspective offered by the conference and the present publication: the questioning of currently accepted sex/gender norms.

Generally, sex/gender and the corresponding norms seem to be an integral part of life – like the air we breathe. It seems *normal* to have a sex/gender – and only one at that. The power of such normative notions becomes particularly clear in encounters with people who do not seem to conform to these norms, or who even seem to resist them altogether. This observation brings up questions about the necessity of such norms and the consequences resulting from their *blind*, i.e. unreflected implementation.

Particularly with regard to children, adolescents and their families, an intersectional perspective quickly reveals correlations regarding the potency of normative attributions of sex/gender with other interrelational dimensions such as ethnicity, age and physical constitutiveness. On the other hand, normative notions, processes of norming, of approaching variation and otherness, as well as confirmation and affirmation can also be elucidated with such a perspective on children and adolescents.

Without trying to establish yet another classification of people with affiliations to particular groups of sex/gender, we will in the following present two groups, regarding those who do not conform to the hitherto predominant sex/gender norms, that this publication is primarily concerned with: people who feel they do not belong to the sex/gender assigned to them at birth are in the following referred to as trans persons. Those whose physical features cannot be reduced to one of the two standard sexes, i.e. female or male, are referred in the present publication as intersex persons. Correspondingly, children and adolescents are referred to as trans children/adolescents or intersex children/adolescents. Their situation remains, even in the year 2014, largely uncharted territory, which only very few parents, families or professionals have had a glimpse of, often through the presence of a child who does not conform to the hitherto valid, binary sex/gender order.

The conference and the present publication continue the cooperation between the association Intersex & Transgender Luxembourg (resp. its precursor Transgender Luxembourg) and the University of Luxembourg, which has been maintained since 2010, and open a new chapter for gender research in Luxembourg. From the very beginning, the association Intersex & Transgender Luxembourg has, apart from the distribution of information for and the support of children, adolescents and adults and their families, devoted itself to the further education of professionals in all those occupational areas which are relevant for intersex and trans persons, particularly in the fields of medicine, law and the educational sector, and has conducted debates with policy makers. In addition, the association has consistently sought contact with research institutions. The embedding of these gender issues in a scientific and empirical context has been achieved by the university research group Gender Studies, established in 2003, which has since become the Institute of Gender, Diversity and Migration at the University of Luxembourg, in cooperation with the University's Gender Representative.

On the part of the university, the thematic focus on research of intersex and transgender issues represents a consistent advancement of women's studies towards a research initially guided by a binary, and later a more plural approach to sex/gender orders.

The conference of 2012 was preceded by two jointly organized conferences in the years 2010, 'All sexes/genders are present in nature ... but not equal before the law' ('Alle Geschlechter sind in der Natur ... aber nicht gleich vor dem Gesetz'), and 2011, 'Identities Beyond Facts & Ideologies' ('Identitäten jenseits von Fakten & Ideologien').

These events, which remained largely unnoticed by the public and professional circles, had from the very start been geared towards an international, interdisciplinary, empirically based, theory-forming and practical orientation. The collaboration further comprised the organization of joint teaching events which met with a highly concentrated and sustained interest on the part of the students.

We would like to thank the President of the University of Luxembourg (2005-2014), Prof. Dr. Rolf Tarrach, not only for supporting the matter of all these events and the present publication, but also for his long-standing and constant encouragement to include issues beyond the gender mainstream in the spotlight of scientific and social debates. Our thanks also go to Mars Di Bartolomeo, the minister of health at the time, for the patronage of this conference, as well as to the Luxembourg *Fonds National de la Recherche* (FNR) for providing extra financial funding, enabling us to stage the conference on which this publication is based. We thank all authors, translators, and the layout designer. Many

of those who helped and supported us in accomplishing the wide range of tasks necessary for the success of a publication of this kind remain unnamed here. We would at this point like to thank them sincerely for their dedication, as well as the team of the publisher 'transcript' for its unfailingly patient, creative and pleasant support.

In the *first* of six chapters, the present conference proceedings 'Normed Children' suggest the topic of a conceptual understanding of gender as a continuum, as changeable, polypolar and plural, without disregarding the problem of a simplifying and labeling attribution. Subsequently, the question of complex forms of existence that can become muddled to the detriment of normative orders is discussed, followed by issues of sex/gender identities in connection with human rights. The topical framework concludes with the examination of aspects of non-discrimination in the context of gender debates.

The *second* chapter is devoted to a more detailed discussion of categorization and places it in relation to non-compliance with normative precepts and the possible consequences resulting from it. The term 'human sex/gender-related constitutiveness' is examined for its epistemological and ethical relevance, followed by reflections on if and how it is possible for anyone to avoid categorizations. The chapter concludes with replies to the questions 'Who has a disorder? Who gets to decide this?' and finally presents an artistic take on sex/gender.

Biomedical approaches constitute the focus of the *third* chapter, which begins with an investigation of the sexuation of anatomy, goes on to discuss the predictive power of genes and DNA on the development of the genital tract, and presents the example of a Cuban government-funded project in the health sector as an innovative way of dealing with plural forms of sexuality, sexes and bodies by making and questioning connections between sex/gender norms frequently regarded as universal, and medicine, as well as changes in approaching norms.

The *fourth* chapter addresses issues of sex/gender normativity with regard to trans identity from various perspectives, with one particular focus being on aspects of definitional power and self-determination of trans children, and another on the presentation and discussion of innovative concepts dealing with hormone blockers at the beginning of puberty, as well as on issues of reproductive medicine in the context of genetical and biological trans parenthood.

The *fifth* chapter centers around a multi-faceted discussion of sex/gender normativity and inter-sex/gender-related constitutiveness. The emphasis in this chapter lies on the representations of personal realities from the perspective of intersex persons, including the accompanying demands for the recognition of non-normative notions which are not reflected in the framework of a heteronor-

mative and binary matrix of sexes. The legitimacy of medical measures is questioned in view of this, followed by a discussion of the rights of intersex persons as well as the resistance of the medical field against criticism of intersex activists whose actions target operations on the frontline of credibility.

The *sixth* chapter is devoted to the field of education and shows the influence of sex/gender norms, particularly in the context of school and over the course of childhood and adolescence. This chapter explores the significance of the parent-child bond for the development of humans, describes the conveyance of gender competency in the education of biology teachers using a practical example, subsequently investigates the connection between cultural sex/gender-related constitutiveness and trans children, presents gender-plural educational offers beyond a binary sex/gender order and discusses the connection between trans identity and puberty.

The publication concludes with an unusual review of the conference, reflecting on optimism, happiness and other cruelties of a conference on gender norms.

As editors of this volume we hope to reflect the diversity of the conference held in September 2012 in Luxembourg, which continues to reverberate to this day, and thus to contribute to a debate which has only just begun and which offers a chance to do more justice to the plurality of life forms.

