

Challenges posed by transgender - passing within ambiguities and interrelations¹

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This article critically interrogates current academic knowledge productions on transgender exemplified by figurations of passing. Following a deconstructionist approach, I challenge normalizations and silenced differences within dominant conceptualizations of passing related to transgender. By investigating interconnected positionings of transgender within power relations, I will argue in favour of intersectional approaches to transgender. Regarding interrelations of knowledge productions and power relations, I will end by suggesting politics of articulation as means for epistemological-political-transformations referring to transgender.

Keywords: transgender, passing, intersectionality, normalizations, politics of articulation

I hated reading when I was a child. And I have no clue why my parents put me into school when I had just turned six. They told me it was a trend then. It wasn't trendy for me at all. In second grade, the teacher told my mother that I had hardly any reading and writing skills and that she should reduce her work to part-time to help me. I had what some people call dyslexia, never diagnosed, but still a huge difficulty within the norms of the German language. I still forget words in my sentences. I still sometimes write words so differently that, in former years, neither my mother nor my spelling programme were able to recognize

them. I had a really hard time reading so I learnt texts by heart. After doing fourth grade twice I made it from Hauptschule to Gymnasium² and I started to perform. Acting and expressing myself, my anger, my gender trouble, my riot, not only taught me self-esteem, but also English.

Now I really enjoy reading and writing, but I still struggle to find my own words. Words that would vocalise my silence. The silence I swallowed for years. Silencing not only being a dyslexic in academia, and being trans and queer - I couldn't really hide that, even if I tried hard on the surface - but also the silence of

growing up in a violent abusive family structure where sexism, constant money-shortage and racism were entangled just too much. Entangled just too much to blame only one structure of oppression. The ambivalences of a working-class background and later achieved middle-class access to education, being a 'binational child', located and raised in Germany, one parent German, the other a Hungarian who never got rid of the 'guest-worker-status' despite having a diploma and German citizenship. The ambiguities of not being 'totally German' but at the same time enjoying so many privileges of whiteness.

Sometimes I still lack voice to express these ambivalences and to find comprehensive words. But every time I speak, every time I enter the stage, I break the silence, I deal with the pain and the strength and I feel support. When I read my texts the audience reads me reading. I read the audience, how they read me and question, if I pass or don't. And if I pass, then how? As a guy, a transguy, a queer, a German, middle-class, academic, activist, boxer, performer, a writer? Then, I ask how the audience reads my texts, how they make sense to themselves, if they make sense at all. Yeah well, sometimes I really wish there would be a reading which is either right or wrong, instead of all these brackets. But still these pieces of the puzzle are mine. They are my breaks, my gaps, my inbetweens, ambiguities,

cracks, voids and I can build more and more bridges between them. I tell you all that, expose myself and make myself vulnerable to make one point: The silence and invisibility about one's history that many trans_people³ legitimately seek as the safe haven after years of hyper-visibility, doesn't feel like a safe haven to me at all. I had to silence too much to not know the weight, the invisible burden and pain of shame and the danger of silenced histories. I won't be silent anymore and there is not only one silence.

To me that feels like another closet. A closet filled with the secrets of unmarked norms disguised as deviances, wrapped in parcels with string. Packages with stamps on top of them saying airmail. But they are everything but air. They don't leave air to breath. Another stamp: Attention – handle with care - breakable. Breakable indeed. Breaking down whole constructs. Breaking down brackets, slices of glass cutting through history, releasing toxic clouds of dust, exposing past wounds enacted in current pain. My closet reached to the ceiling filled with rocks of fear, scares and pain. I learned to collect them, to isolate them, to wrap them in packages. But I have also learned that I am not the only one who has a closet and that this closet is not a personal failure. A lot of trans_people have a closet in order to survive. But that closet very often contains more than transphobic violence and the painful

struggle of transition.

Maybe the closet gets lighter if we share the knowledge of how it feels to mingle between two cognitive systems, to transgress, to search for places where there are few or none available, to express the effort of saving one's heart from being confronted with misreadings, assaults and violence over and over again. But when we open the closed doors, very likely more packages will crack open than just tranny-packs. Packages containing experiences of sexist, racist, homophobic, classist and ableist discriminations. When we want to address these silences and the norms we faced and swallowed, we may discover that these packages do connect, that they cannot be separated. We might also question whether simply adding the label 'trans' on top of all the packages is enough.

The focal point of this article is the (de)subjugated knowledges (Foucault 2003, 7-8), which were highlighted in the introduction to *The Transgender Studies Reader* (Stryker and Whittle 2006, 1-19). In challenging subjugated knowledges exemplified by figurations of passing, I will use a deconstructionist perspective with the intention of interrogating normalizations (Butler 2004, 40-55) and silencings (Alarcón 1990, 363ff; McCall 2005, 1781) in knowledge productions of transgender. Following Derrida, I understand deconstruction not as a method, but

as ongoing processes of pushing further by remaining sceptical about rules, norms and canonizations (Derrida 1988, 3). In this respect, I will not suggest a model or guideline for an all-embracing approach to critical research on transgender. Rather, I advocate two entry-points to conceptualizing deconstruction as a process: firstly, knowledge productions are never neutral and objective, but embedded within power relations, and, secondly, producing knowledge is an *activity* that can be understood as a constant epistemological-political undoing and redoing (Butler 2004; Lykke 2010). For critical research which intends to challenge the paradoxical and power-evasive subject-object-split between a *depersonalized, objective, neutral researcher* and the *object of research*, the continuous self-reflection of scholars regarding their *desires and relations* to their research is indispensable and situated within power relations (Hale 2006; Haritaworn 2008; Lykke 2010). In this regard my paper can be understood as a work-in-progress and situated reflection on current academic knowledge productions of transgender exemplified by figurations of passing, which is guided by the overall intention to engage in transdisciplinary and transversal dialogue, to challenge and interrupt norms of academic theorizing and furthermore to enhance consciousness of the interconnectedness of epistemological-political transfor-

mations.

In this paper I will open by interrogating terminologies and conceptions regarding transgender. I then turn my attention, using the example of passing, to examining normalizations and silenced differences within knowledge productions and argue in favour of intersectional/interdependent approaches to transgender that reflect the interrelation of knowledge productions and multiple power relations. Finally, I will propose a politics of articulation as a political-epistemological means to challenge normalizations within knowledge production on transgender.

Terminologies and theorizing transgender

In this section, I introduce my terminology of choice for this article and problematize contemporary dominant understandings of the terms transgender and transsexual. I also propose an alternative approach to meaning-makings of transgender.

I favour the term *transgender* rather than the term transsexual, because the term *transsexual* is conventionally signified and regulated by Western medical-pathological diagnoses of 'Gender Identity Disorder' (GID)⁴ as well as national laws on transsexuality⁵, which enforce binary gender/sex norms of subjecthood (man or woman) by means of pathologizations (Butler 2004, 75ff).⁶ By using the term 'transgender' as a relatively open concept for different people who

don't conform/go beyond/transgress binary gender/sex norms, who take hormones or don't and who want/had or don't want surgeries, name change and/or change of personhood (Butler 2004, 6; Stryker and Whittle 2006, 254), I emphasize practices of self-identification and self-naming,⁷ as well as the heterogeneity of trans_identified people. I use the terms trans_people, trans_ and trans_identified as synonyms of transgender to express that the boundaries between transgender and transsexuals are not fixed but dynamic. Thus, I hope to disrupt the perceived dichotomy between transgender persons who live visibly and voluntarily beyond/between/outside binary gendered/sexed norms of subjecthood with no aim to physical transition and transsexuals who seek *complete* bodily transition via hormone therapy and 'Gender Reassignment Surgeries' (GRS).

This apparent dichotomy between transgender and transsexuals does not take into account the fact that access to transition for trans_identified people in Western countries is still highly policed and based upon pathologizations which enforce and subjugate gender/sex differences under a binary norm, with the aim of creating 'success-stories', assigning MaleToFemale transsexuals (M2Fs) and FemaleToMale transsexuals (F2Ms) a place of invisibility.⁸ In this regard, transition is still very often imagined as a linear process from A (man or woman) to B ('the other

sex') with the underlying objective being to make trans_people fit into and readjust to binary gender/sex norms of subjecthood,⁹ which are directly related to compulsory heterosexuality (Butler 1990, 1993, 2004; Namaste 2000; Valentine 2007) and to neo-liberal political economic interests to reinstall the productive (labour) forces of trans_people. Furthermore, I stress the necessity to situate, for example, questions of access to transition(ing) as inherently intertwined with racist and class-regulated in-accessibility to health care¹⁰ and moreover nation-states legal frameworks defining subjecthood/personhood which is connected to the in-accessibility to rights of non-discrimination/non-violation.

In 'Romancing the Transgender Native: Rethinking the Use of the 'Third Gender' concept,' Evan Towle and Lynn Morgan critique Western ideas of 'Third gender' in so-called 'other cultures' (Towle and Morgan 2006, 666-684). Following their line, I argue that transgender is not a self-evident term and concept, and that definitions vary more than just theoretically (Valentine 2007, 31). My hypothesis is that terminologies, conceptualizations and significations of transgender are always situated within specific socio-historical, geopolitical and cultural power relations, and therefore should not be exported or transferred cross-culturally as universal terms and concepts. In this regard, I consider

academic and non-academic meaning-makings of transgender as positioned within the paradox of affirmative practices of re-signification, that is to say they are in danger of reproducing norms that silence differences within power relations. Thus, understandings of transgender are shaped not only by juridico-medical frameworks, but also by socio-cultural contexts. How then can these understandings be opened up?

In order to interrogate the problems of conceptualizing transgender in relation to dominant significations and silenced differences, I want to make a short detour to significations of queer, which I conceive as a useful analogy. Gloria Anzaldúa problematizes the way in which the term and concept 'queer', which emerged in the 1960s and '70s from US-American sexual cultures which 'fell outside' the rhetoric of 'recognition', 'sameness' and 'normality' of white middle-class gays and lesbians, has been taken over by white middle-class academics who reproduce the colour-evasiveness and simultaneous re-inscription of queer 'racial Others':

Queer is used as a false unifying umbrella which all 'queers' of all races, ethnicities and classes are shoved under. At times we need this umbrella to solidify our ranks against outsiders. But even when we seek shelter under it we must not forget that it homogenizes, erases our difference (Anzaldúa

1991, 250).

Further to Anzaldúa's emphasis on the acknowledgement of difference, Chandra Mohanty argues that not only the recognition of difference matters, but also how differences are presented, which differences are allowed and which are disqualified (Mohanty 2003, 193, 239).

I therefore suggest rethinking meaning-makings of transgender as situated knowledge productions (Haraway 1991, 183-185) and constitutive activities within powerful practices of regulation, normalization and silencing, as well as moments of disruption, aberration, resistance and subversion (Haraway 2004, 89, 105). Particularly insightful here is, for example, Carrie Sandahl's critique of the underlying silenced norm of ability within queer theory and politics. She not only stresses the necessity of recognizing differences, but also argues in favour of articulations of radical queer politics such as a refusal to pass:

As outsiders, queers and crips *refuse to minimize* their differences by passing as either straight or able-bodied. Instead, they *appropriate* and *rearticulate* labels that the mainstream once used to *silence* or *humiliate* them and that liberal fractions of their subcultures would like to suppress (Sandahl 2003, 36; emphasis mine. See also McRuer 2003, 79-105; Siebers 2008, 291-307).

To me this figuration of passing connected to silences and rearticulations is highly interesting to interrogate further.

Passing¹¹ and interdependent politics of articulation

Historically the concept of passing has been importantly signified by the processes of racial passing within white Christian power structures (López 1996, 155ff; López 2005, 1-10; Wollrad 2005, 19-56), mainly in the United States, but also within Europe – especially in the case of Nazi-Germany (Pulver 1999, 95-97). Based upon colonial and Nazi ideologies of 'blood, race and soil' 'to keep the white race white' (Hodes 1999, 407) and maintained through societal structures that privilege the seemingly unmarked and invisible norm of whiteness (Frankenberg 1997; McIntosh 1988), racial passing most often indicates that a person passes as white and enjoys the temporary and precarious privileges of whiteness (Ginsberg 1996, 1-16). In this section, I want to explore the concept of passing as a way of exploring normalizations and silenced differences in relation to transgender. I will do this by looking, firstly, at the connections between passing and othering, before introducing an intersectional approach with a view to voicing previously silenced differences.

Passing and othering

Brooke Kroeger points out that the

underlying theoretical conceptualizations of passing are quite conflicting and controversial: 'In the most general way, it is passing when people effectively *present* themselves as *other than who they understand themselves to be*.... Passing never feels *natural*. It is a second *skin that never adheres*' (Kroeger 2003, 7, my emphasis). This conceptualization of passing is based upon the myth of a natural coherent 'self' conceived of as a combination of, and consequently potentially split between, 'inside' ('natural' feelings) and 'outside' (constructed upon physiological indicators, significantly skin as an embodied surface that can never bind and hold (the promise of) the presentation). In this understanding, passing is an effective self-presentation as *other* ('outside'), which doesn't correspond to the self-understanding ('inside'), and is hence a trick, an imposter.

Within (affirmative) transgender knowledge productions this understanding and usage of passing is not only challenged, but the illusion of a natural gendered/sexed self and body is also debunked. Passing most of the time is used to signify the *individual* experience and *moment* of being regarded as how trans_people *understand themselves*, or how they prefer to be regarded in respect to their self-identified gender/sex (Green 2000, 499-508; Koch-Rein 2006, 19-28). In contrast, 'being read' is very often considered as the opposite ex-

perience, namely the failure to pass (Butler 2004, 6). Furthermore, Sara Ahmed points out that passing is often conceived of in voluntaristic terms as a 'radical and transgressive practice' (Ahmed 1999, 88, 94), which indicates the impossibility of fixing identities, as well as foregrounding the limits of visibility and representations. At the same time, the underlying norm within dominant sociological accounts continues to conceptualize passing as the ability of a person to be considered as a member of 'another' - presumably stable and 'natural' - social group or identity category than the one to which a person is 'originally' considered to belong (Renfrow 2001)

The idea of 'origin' related to an 'original belonging' is of crucial importance, as this myth is constructed and rationalized within many positivist scientific approaches, and enables the installation and perpetuation of dominance. It is also a founding argument of nations and nationalism.¹² The ideology of an 'original belonging' needs to be contextualized within multiple power relations that operate by creating hierarchies through identity construction of 'self' and the 'others', as Trinh T. Minh-ha writes:

If identity refers to the whole pattern of sameness within a being, the style of a continuing me that permeated all the changes undergone, then difference remains within the boundary of that

which distinguishes one identity from another. This means that at heart X must be X, Y must be Y, and X cannot be Y. Those running around yelling X is not X and X can be Y, usually land in a hospital, a rehabilitation center, a concentration camp, or a reservation (Minh-ha 1997, 415).

The interrelation of power relations and dichotomous identity constructions, such as man/woman, occident/orient, white/black, culture/nature, mind/body, heterosexual/homosexual, non-trans/trans, can be better understood within the framework of othering. *Othering practices* indicate practices for *making-people-other* by essentializing and naturalizing differences as a means of constructing and legitimizing hierarchies, which are indispensably connected to colonizing and civilizing legacies and its perpetuations (Coronil 2002, 176-219; Dietze 2006, 233). *Othering practices* foreground the *activities* of constructing a superior *norm* of a coherent 'self' by projecting the 'others' as *deviant* and inferior (Haraway 2004, 113), wherein the productions of modern Western sciences are of crucial importance of rationalizing and legitimizing power relations (Campbell and Oakes 1997; McClintock 1997).

The connection between othering and passing is exemplified by Ahmed's interrogation of racial passing and the related difference between passing as and appropriat-

ing the subordinated other - passing as black as a white person - and passing as privileged norm - passing as white as a black person (Ahmed 1999, 93, 100). This difference, as Ahmed stresses, is not one based upon the reality and existence of different races, but a structural difference, built upon criteria for racial identification and categorizations, which are enunciated by 'apparatuses of knowledge' that are informed and inform colonial privilege (Ahmed 1999, 93, 97). Within this context, Ahmed notes a paradoxical aspect of passing: passing destabilizes norms by indicating the impossibility to *tell* and see the difference, but at the same time it fixes and secures power relations as differences are continuously reaffirmed (Ahmed 1999, 100, 89, 91). In this way, the 'not-I' is reproduced, as passing as a subordinated other requires *assuming, appropriating and mastering* the 'place of the other', but not 'being the other' (Ahmed 1999, 99). These practices are perpetuated within neo-liberal neo-colonial practices of cultural appropriation and commodification of 'the inappropriated others' (Minh-ha 1997), for example music, clothes, language etc.

In order to further interrogate underlying norms and mutual constitutive processes of subject formations vis-à-vis constructions of 'deviant others', I find Judith Butler's investigation of the question of *how* subjects become subjects insightful. Butler emphasizes processes of *be-*

coming subject as complex and paradox practices of *subjectivation* and *subjugation* under power structures (Butler 1997, 135), and stresses that the formation of a coherent 'inside' of a normalized subject *necessitates* a constitutive 'outside', the *abject* as the unintelligible, unthinkable, unlivable, untellable, incoherent (Butler 1993, 8, 52, 53, 94, 243). With regards to the gender/sex dimension of othering, I want to stress that the compulsive binary gender/sex norm of subjecthood (man or woman) is constitutively built upon the abjection of trans_people and intersexuals as 'un-natural', 'deviant', 'abnormal' and 'sick other' (Spade 2006, 319). Sandy Stone also connects passing to the abjections of trans_people and intersexuals as 'unintelligible other', and outlines a complex and problematic interconnection of denied subjecthood and passing, which can be understood as a kind of double-edged sword:

It is difficult to generate a counter-discourse if one is programmed to disappear... The most critical thing a transsexual can do, the thing that *constitutes success*, is to 'pass'. Passing means to live successfully in the gender of choice, to be accepted as a 'natural' member of that gender. Passing means the denial of mixture. One and the same with passing is *effacement* of the prior gender role, or the construction of a *plausible history* (Stone 2006, 230;

emphasis mine).

Referring to the normalized, gendered, sexed binary, the neologism *cisgender*¹³ used for non-trans_people highlights the idea of a congruence between the gender/sex assigned in the birth certificate (male or female) and the lived and embodied gender/sex, which is sometimes combined with compulsory heterosexual behaviour (Serano 2007, 24-26, 161-195). The use of *cisgender* needs to be further reflected upon politically-epistemologically as way of shifting focus from the 'un-naturalness', 'abnormality' and 'deviance' of trans_people and intersexuals towards the underlying silenced norms of compulsory binary gender/sex subjecthood, and myth of a 'natural' and 'essential' gender/sex dichotomy. This shift from 'otherness' towards interrogations of norms and normalizations reflects scientific-political transformations emerging from within Postcolonial Studies, Critical Whiteness Studies, Critical Occidentalism, Critical Heteronormativity Studies, Critical Masculinity Studies, Critical Dis/Ability Studies etc.

As the emergence of the term *cisgender* demonstrates, processes of meaning-makings of transgender cannot be separated from power relations which enforce not only binary gendered/sexed and heterosexualized norms of subjecthood, but which are also inextricably interwoven with practices of racializa-

tion, class stratification, heterosexualization, as well as constructions of dis/ability and age. In this respect, the terminology of passing is also used to signify perceived positions concerning race, class, dis/ability, sexual orientation, education, religion, age and gender/sex identity. Despite, or rather because of, these complexities, I consider passing a productive figure to interrogate mutual constitutive subjugations of differences within intertwined power relations.

Intersectional perspectives

Influenced by the Combahee River Collective's 'Black Feminist Statement' about 'interlocking systems of oppression' (Combahee River Collective 1981, 210-218) and the analytic approaches of *intersectionality* (e.g. Crenshaw 1991) and *interdependence* (e.g. Walgenbach et al. 2007) that it inspired, I propose an intersectional reflection on transgender-passing, which conceptualizes power relations of binary asymmetric gender/sex norms as *interdependent* with, and thus mutually constitutive of, norms and positionings related to, race/class/sexuality/dis-ability. These positionings can be understood as discursively constructed and transitive, but at the same time existing as real, institutionalized and conventionalized practices of discrimination/privilege within interrelated power relations (Lykke 2006, 150-160).

In addressing discrimination in

debates about intersectionality Erel et al argue that current approaches often fail to address disability and transphobia, and also put 'white trans people and non-trans people of colour in mutual competition' (Erel et al. 2008, 9). I consider this competitive situation, which addresses either questions of racism or transphobia or ableism or classism, to be a fundamental problem which reveals how critical research participates in power dynamics and its acts of re-producing norms and silenced difference (Hornscheidt 2007, 88-100). With a nod to Audre Lorde's 'There is No Hierarchy of Oppression' (Lorde 1983), I aim to resist the idea of evaluating and ranking different dimensions of passing hierarchically, as passing is always situational and context-specific and does not always relate to the achievement of a hierarchically privileged position. Hence, practices of passing remain ambivalent regarding the potential complicity in re-producing powerful norms and should not be interrogated abstractly, but contextualised and positioned within interrelated power dynamics. For example, Female2Male transsexuals as well as Male2Female transsexuals achieve a privileged position if they pass as cisgender, but, at the same time, F2Ms and M2Fs are positioned differently within Western patriarchal society structures that privilege masculinity over femininity.

I want to foreground that passing

does not only depend on the recognition of other people, but that it also encompasses several power relations and related codes which vary in regard to socio-political, historical, cultural and economical contexts. In this respect, it is important to locate and differentiate explicitly the conceptions of passing both theoretically (Koch-Rein 2006, 19-28) and within daily norms of interconnected power relations, which should not be equated or conflated, but which ought to be reflected within their complexity and mutual constitution. Moreover, I propose rethinking passing less as an *individual* experience (micro level), which depends only on the recognition of others - mostly those who are in power to decide what is 'normal' - but as *precarious agency*, ability, technique, a learning of codes, which relates to social mobility within power relations (micro and macro level). At the same time, it has to be kept in mind that not everyone can pass because passing is constitutively limited by predominant (naturalized-pathologized) norms of subjecthood.¹⁴ As Vivianne K. Namaste provocatively writes: 'What does the normalization of transsexualism mean for transgenders of color, for those who are poor, for artists, or for sex trade workers?' (Namaste 1996, 195).

Thus, I claim that passing can be considered as a *precarious, temporally regulated passage*, which can be stopped at any moment. Passing can never be a safe position be-

cause there is the *constant and constitutive* threat of being hindered from passing and read as 'other', and in terms of mutual constitutive power relations there is not just one "other". Most of the time, passing is not a 'choice' or a strategic positioning, but a precarious movement and often a question of survival. To imagine passing as an instance of 'choosing' acceptance in a so-called 'other' social group or identity category than the one to which the person is considered to 'originally belong', is a trivialization and normalization of the discrimination and violence that trans_people, People of Color, people with disabilities and homosexuals face.

To return to the beginning of this article, where I problematized silence connected to knowledge production on transgender and stressed the activity of meaning-making and agency, I want to emphasize that passing is not only linked to the politics of visibility and visibility,¹⁵ but also to voice and voicing. As Evelyn Hammonds argues: 'visibility in and of itself does not erase a history of silence nor does it challenge the structure of power and domination, symbolic and material, that determines what can and cannot be seen. The goal should be to develop a 'politics of articulation'' (Hammonds 1991, 152). With this in mind, I suggest re-thinking passing as a productive figure that shifts the focus away from homogenized identity categories and the *representation and in-*

tegration of new identity categories which set up new boundaries and exclusions, and instead towards investigations into simultaneously existent normalizations and silencings regarding transgender. Keeping in mind Haraway's statement that 'boundaries take provisional, never-finished shape in articulatory practices' (Haraway 2004, 89), I stress the necessity for a double-move in knowledge productions on transgender: The undoing of normalized knowledge production, which regulate and re-produce binary gender/sex norms of subjecthood, and the re-doing of knowledge productions which interrelates subjugations and normalizations.

Linda Schlossberg argues that passing can be understood as a kind of agency to destabilize norms through creating and establishing an 'alternative set of narratives' (Schlossberg 2001, 4). Inspired by this, I want to rethink voice and the politics of articulating not only as a threat of 'being read', but also as *providing agency to voice and articulate difference*. In particular, my desire is to engage in rearticulations and re-significations of transgender which grasp ambivalences, complexities, differences and seemingly uncategorizable resistances that challenge not only binary gender/sex norms in knowledge productions, but which also enable political transformations by *interrelating* resistance towards different dimensions of oppression and subjugation¹⁶, and thus radical-

ly challenging and politicizing norms of what is considered to be human (Butler 2004, 23, 39, 88-90). In this regard, I conceive of a politics of articulation as a possibility to disrupt and subvert norms of authorized and conventionalized knowledge productions that relate the personal to the political, enunciating *interrelated* subject positions, knowledges and histories, which are simultaneously situated, repressed, resistant and transforming within intertwined power relations.

Inspired by Nina Lykke's argument that 'excess meaning and ambiguity tend to sneak into the binary scheme' of knowledge production (Lykke 2010, 280), I want to end - and at the same time begin - by suggesting engaging with excess-meanings of transgender by a *politics of articulation* which interrupts norms and homogenized identity categories within knowledge production by investigating ambivalences, shades, cracks, gaps and inbetweens as productive and potential political-epistemological loci for further theorizing transgender. In Haraway's terms: 'To articulate is to signify. It is to put things together, scary things, risky things, contingent things. I want to live in an articulate world' (Haraway 2004, 106).

Open End

In this article, I pointed out firstly that the term and concept transgender should not be transferred cross-culturally as a universal concept.

Rather, normalizing and silencing practices within Western research on transgender need to be reflected upon critically with regards to their practices of negotiating and authorizing meanings, which are both in danger of re-producing norms and silencings, but which can also enable subversions and interruptions. With a nod to Haraway, I stated that knowledge production on transgender can be better understood as situated meaning-makings. Secondly, using the example of passing, I argued that transgender cannot be comprehensively theorized under the single category of sex/gender, because trans_identified people are *simultaneously* constituted by gendered/sexed, racialized, sexualized, dis/abled, aged and class-based subjugations and their related discriminations/privileges. By conceptualizing knowledge production as *agency within intertwined power relations*, I proposed engaging in a *politics of articulation* as a means of interrupting academic norms and opening up space for knowledge productions which position, resignify and re-politicize meaning-makings of transgender within intertwined power relations.

Endnotes

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and critique of my first academic publication.

² The German school systems divides young pupils after four years of elementary school into a three-class-divided school system according to educational performance measured in grades: Hauptschule (lowest level); Realschule (middle level) and Gymnasium (highest level and usually the only route to enter university afterwards).

³ With the underscore in trans_identification, trans_identified, trans_people and trans_ I aim to highlight differences in regard to positionings among trans_people.

⁴ The diagnosis 'Gender Identity Disorder' (GID) is a medically produced classification of mental and behavioural disorders, which is internationally consolidated and legitimized by the World Health Organization (WHO) in the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD) 10th Revision - Version for 2007 Chapter V F64 'Gender identity disorder' (302.5- 302.6, 302.85), <http://apps.who.int/classifications/apps/icd/icd10online/index.htm?gf60.htm> as well as in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of mental Disorders (DSM IV-TR), published by the American Psychiatric Association under the Chapter 'Sexual and Gender Identity Disorder'.

⁵ See for example the German 'Transsexuellengesetz'.

⁶ Pathological classifications of trans_people by the diagnosis 'Gender identity Disorder' are strongly contested by transgender networks and human rights bodies within the European context, e.g. by TransGender Europe (TGEU) and their 'Stop Trans Pathologization 2012'- campaign (<http://www.tgeu.org/node/78>).

⁷ The significance of naming is pointed out

for example in Butler's theorizing. With reference to Althusser's concept interpellation, Butler argues that becoming subject (subjectivation) particularly works via being called and named into being. Interpellations are pointed out as gendered/sexed speech acts, such as the highly significant normalized question 'Is it a boy or a girl?': 'The naming is at once the setting of a boundary, and also the repeated inculcation of a norm' (Butler 1993, 8, 44; Butler 1997, 135; see also Hornscheidt 2007, 70-72; Hornscheidt 2008, 22-23; Lykke 2010, 281).

⁸ I do not argue that the wish to be invisible as trans_ is not legitimate. Rather, I suggest that invisibility and disclosure of an 'incoherent' past (having a birth certificate of the 'other sex') need to be considered and problematized as ambivalent protective and survival strategies of trans_people being confronted by daily verbal and physical violence, as well as denial of legal-political personhood as trans_ (Scheman 1997). I thank Lann Hornscheidt and Doro Wiese for inspiring thoughts on the ambivalence of silence and disclosure.

⁹ I am aware that there are trans_people, who are comfortable in identifying within binary sex/gender norms of subject, as either 100% man or woman, for whom my argument about the societal and economic pressure to readjust to binary norms might not account.

¹⁰ In this regard the in-accessibility to transitioning for many trans_people, which is related to the unwillingness of public health care institutions to cover the costs, needs to be reflected upon critically within a larger framework of the neoliberal endeavours of Western governments to externalize their responsibility for providing health care to the private (see Cox 1995; Maarse 2006; Davis 2001).

¹¹ I thank Urmila Goel for feedback and inspiring exchange on this part.

¹² For critical interrogations of nationalism and its construction upon the myth of 'origin' see for example Anderson: 'Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist' (Gellner quoted in Anderson 1991, 6; Balibar 1992; Hobsbawm 1988). Yuval-Davis and McClintock also investigate the racialized and gendered/sexed as well as heterosexualized family-metaphor as naturalized genesis narrative of nations and nationalism: 'The family as a metaphor offered a single genesis narrative for national history while, at the same time, the family as an institution became void of history and excluded from national' (McClintock 1997, 91. See also Yuval-Davis 2001, 27). See also Puar's interrogation of national-racist continuities, which also comprise western gay-lesbian politics, highlighted by the concept homonationalism (Puar 2007).

¹³ Linguistically the prefix cis signifies 'on the same side as', whereas the prefix trans indicates 'across, beyond or opposite'. The preference for using the prefix cis instead of the prefix bio (in German 'bio-woman' and 'bio-man') relates to the underlying connotation of bio with pathologized 'natural' gender/sex, which can be traced biopolitically by hormone tests in blood and chromosome tests. See also racist continuities of blood-based and chromosomal racial categorizations, as well as the permanence of eugenic discourses and practices concerning so-called sicknesses and/or dis/abilities (Elbe 2005, 406-413).

¹⁴ Julie Greenberg for example analyzes how, in U.S. legal history, legal personhood has historically been built upon binary biological constructs of race and gender/sex: 'Originally, legal classification systems based upon race and sex operated on the assumptions that (1) race and sex are binary, and (2) race and sex can be biologically determined' (Greenberg 2002, 103).

¹⁵ For a reflection of visibility in regard to the virtual see Haraway (2004, 106-107).

¹⁶ e. g. by assemblages or rhizomes see Deleuze/Guattari (1987); Puar (2007).

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