

The Intersection of Autistic and Trans* Identity: Qualitative Engaged Study in Eastern European Activist Groups

Authors : Hana Drštičková

Abstract : The paper describes the findings of a qualitative, engaged research focused on the intersection between transgender and autistic identity in a politically engaged setting of activist (trans, queer, crip, disability justice or any combination thereof) groups. It explores the relationship that autistic and trans people have towards activism and how do they feel their identity(ies) impact the kind of political action they take. Geographically, the research terrain is located mainly in Czechia; however, there are important overlaps with other Eastern European countries. The basis of the research's approach is built on the interconnected principles of the feminist theory of intersectionality, queer/trans studies, disability studies and the concept of the Neurodiversity Paradigm. This paper argues that the social phenomenon of autism and transness is formed differently in Czechia/Eastern Europe and, therefore, deserves additional attention. Nevertheless, it points out that, even though the socio-political context is different, the fact that these identities have a radical political potential to disrupt normative structures in society remains the same. The measure of oppression these structures generate, and the near absence of any public discourse beyond the pathological paradigm in the chosen terrain contributes to the emergence of mainly queer and trans-activist, and to a lesser extent crip, disability justice or mad activist groups, that attract trans and autistic membership. The subsections of the research focus on the topics of the mutual influence of both identities in flux within individual participants, the perceived (dis)connection of networks of oppression or, conversely, support and identification with the community or communities, and the question of how the trans* and autistic members feel their presence affects the activity, internal dynamics, thematic scope and general values of the activist groups they participate in. The research methodology includes participant observation and active participation in groups where the researcher acts as a partial insider, semi-structured in-depth interviews and a critical participatory methodology. Also included is the reflection of not only the combination of researcher and insider roles but also the combination of research and activist intent.

Keywords : activism, autism, queer, neurodiversity, neuroqueer, transgender

Conference Title : ICDD 2024 : International Conference on Disability and Diversity

Conference Location : Oslo, Norway

Conference Dates : June 27-28, 2024