

# Gender-related media manipulation

## Introduction & Social Context

I chose to analyse an article by "Emma", a popular Woman's Magazine in Germany, founded by the well-known figure of Alice Schwarzer. The article is named "TransGesetz: Voller Widersprüche" (engl.: "TransLaw: Full of inconsistencies") and portrays the supposed discourse around the German government's plans to change the still active "Transsexuellengesetz" (engl.: "Transsexual Law") from the year 1980.

The law requires diagnoses of a psychological, sexually associated disorder, for changing one's sex. Moreover, trans\* people must go to court to change their gender in official documents, and it does not allow trans\* people to use their assigned gender's spaces. People, who want to transition, must be sterile - this was originally included in the law, because of the fear, that the disease of being trans\* would spread. Trans\* people are required to undergo hormone replacement therapy..

The new law was delayed again and again, but now, with the first draft published, it is nearly universally received as bad for different reasons. Trans\* people and intersectional feminists perceive it as "too little too late" and want more rights right now. Others fear a rise of sexual predators invading women's spaces.

One of them is Alice Schwarzer, a vocal well-known figure in Germany's media culture. She is known for being a passionate feminist and being the founder of "Emma", but her feminism is explicitly not intersectional. That means she advocates a feminism that excludes, for example, sex workers, Muslim women, and trans\* people. She describes trans\* activists as "sektiererische Absurditäten einer Minderheit" (engl.: „sect-like absurdities of a minority“) and trans\* activism as „propaganda“<sup>1</sup>.

"Emma" is a very popular woman's magazine with a long standing among pre-2000/2010 feminists. It is closely tied to Alice Schwarzer herself, her being the face of the paper. The logo is the filled-out symbol of femininity in a slightly dark pink. Their catchphrase is "Bleibt mutig!" (engl.: "Stay brave!" in 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural). Schwarzer's personal website is highlighted and linked in every online article of "Emma" at the top right corner.



<sup>1</sup> Alice Schwarzer: *Alice Schwarzer über Transsexualität*. In: *emma.de* By: <https://www.emma.de/artikel/anpassung-die-rolle-337403>

## Analysis of the article – Introduction paragraph

Let's look at one of the newest articles from this year to see the arguments, techniques, and ideas, which Schwarzer presents within "Emma." Let's analyse how arguments against trans\* rights are constructed, while still claiming to be in allyship with them. This is a very popular argumentative style, that is found in trans\* exclusionary radical feminism. By starting with the narrative of "wanting to help" trans\* people or "feeling for them", you suggest that you are not biased against trans\* people and put yourself in a benevolent position.

### **TransGesetz: "Voller Widersprüche!"**

*Eltern-Initiativen, Transsexuelle und Feministinnen erklären in Stellungnahmen, warum das „Selbstbestimmungsgesetz“ eine Katastrophe ist. Hier sind sie. An juristisch fundierter Kritik an dem Gesetzentwurf mangelt es also nicht. Werden Justiz- und Frauenministerium weiterhin wagen, Ideologie über Fakten zu stellen?*

### **TransGesetz: "Full of contradictions!"**

*Parents' initiatives, transsexuals and feminists explain in statements why the "self-determination law" is a disaster. Here they are. There is plenty of legally based criticism of the law. Will the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Women's Affairs continue to dare to put ideology above facts?*

The beginning paragraph says that "(engl.:) parents, transsexuals, and feminists" (feminists is gendered only female in original), suggesting that the criticism portrayed below comes from the affected communities themselves. The article still uses the word "transsexuals", a term associating a non-normative gender with a non-normative sexuality, describing trans\* people as inherently sexual, evoking discriminatory images of perverted sexual predators. Using only the term "transsexuals" shows the non-sensibility of the author for the community, while still ensuring people not educated on the topic of their empathy for minorities.

The article calls the law a "Katastrophe" (engl.: "catastrophe") and the criticism of it "fundiert" (engl.: "based/founded"). It uses affectionate language like "Werden [sie] es weiterhin wagen" (engl.: "Will [they] continue to dare") The introduction paragraph ends on the implicit accusation that the ministries would value "Ideologie über Fakten" (engl.: ideology over facts").

Let's now see the facts that are presented in this article.

## Analysis of some techniques

The article continues with a number of uncontextualized quotes of people complaining about the new law, without giving reasons for why they are outraged. It draws a picture of a universal voice against the law, without pointing out, that the reasons for being against it are very heterogenous. Therefore, people, who are biased against trans\* rights, feel valid and even in accordance with trans\* people (quoting a social club of trans\* people):

*Der Kampf um das sogenannte „Selbstbestimmungsgesetz“ geht in die nächste Runde. „Verfassungswidrig“, „voller Widersprüche“, „nicht umsetzbar“, „zeugt von völliger Ahnungslosigkeit“ – so beurteilen ExpertInnen und Feministinnen den Entwurf zum sogenannten „Selbstbestimmungsgesetz“. Auch die „Vereinigung Transsexuelle Menschen“ äußert „ernsthafte Bedenken“.*

*The battle over the so-called "self-determination law" goes into the next round. "Unconstitutional", "full of contradictions", "not implementable", "shows complete cluelessness" - that's how experts and feminists judge the draft of the so-called "self-determination law". Also, the "Association of Transsexual People" expresses "serious concerns".*

Next, the author goes more ideological, calling out "einschlägige Medien von taz bis Süddeutsche" (engl.: "mainstream media from taz to Süddeutsche"), using the old narrative of mainstream media and majority consensus being controlled and therefore wrong, suggesting to better be distrustful. The article calls people who demand more rights in the new law as "Ideologen" (engl.: "ideologues", only male in original), who want to erase "biological gender". Instead of explaining, what that is supposed to mean, the article lists cultural institutions, where a biological gender can supposedly not be ignored: sports, jail, safe spaces for women. Then it again lists people, who supposedly support this cause, like worried parents, doctors, and, again, trans\* people themselves. It is stated that their arguments are generally not heard, and that generally nobody listens to them, without giving examples again.

*In den einschlägigen Medien von taz bis Süddeutsche allerdings kommen bisher nur die Ideologen zu Wort, denen das Gesetz immer noch nicht weit genug geht. Sie wollen jegliches Einräumen der Relevanz des biologischen Geschlechts wieder gestrichen wissen: beim Sport, im Strafvollzug oder beim Zugang zu geschützten Frauenräumen zum Beispiel. Kritische Eltern, Ärzte, Fraueninitiativen, Trans- und Berufsverbände, die sich ebenfalls mit Stellungnahmen zu Wort gemeldet haben – Fehlanzeige! Ihre Argumente werden nicht zitiert. Hier darum ein Überblick über ihre sehr breite und sehr ernste Kritik an dem sogenannten „Selbstbestimmungsgesetz“:*

*In the relevant media from taz to Süddeutsche, however, only the ideologues for whom the law still does not go far enough have had their say. They want to see any concession of the relevance of the biological sex disappear: in sports, in law or in access to protected women's spaces, for example. Critical parents, doctors, women's initiatives, trans and professional associations, who have also taken a stance, are absent! Their arguments are not quoted. Therefore, here is an overview of their very broad and very serious criticism of the so-called "self-determination law".*

People who aren't critical of trans\* rights are called "Realisten" (engl.: "realists"), associating them with a positive, in control, "knowing better" role.

*Die Realisten kritisieren zuallererst, dass der Kern des geplanten Gesetzes immer noch die Abschaffung der Kategorie „Geschlecht“ ist. Danach soll jeder Mensch seinen Geschlechtseintrag durch eine einfache, nicht einmal eidesstattliche Erklärung auf dem Standesamt ändern können, und das einmal im Jahr.*

*The realists criticize, first of all, that the core of the planned law is still the abolition of the category "sex". According to it, every person should be able to change his or her gender by a simple, not even official, declaration at the registry office, and that once a year.*

The article mainly uses the described strategy of making it seem like the opinion of the article is widely shared by many different people. Secondly, the article displays specific, isolated talking points as the core of the argument. It does not talk about the main question unanswered: What is a woman or a man? Is a trans\* man a man? Is a trans\* woman a woman? When claiming to be allied with the cause of accepting trans\* people's identified gender, it implies accepting, that trans\* identity is valid. However, if it really was, the questions raised in the article about the importance of biological sex in certain areas of life would not arise in the first place.

**Source:**

"TRANSGESETZ: "VOLLER WIDERSPRÜCHE!", Emma, 7. Juni 2023,

<https://www.emma.de/artikel/das-gesetz-ist-voller-widersprueche-340341>.