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Legal gender recognition and messy trans experiences

In 2016, Norway legalised gender self-determination, allowing for one to change legal gender (male/female) without the previously required sterilisation. The question at the crux of my presentation is what impact does legal recognition of one's gender identity have on one's sense of self? Understanding identity in its complexity – as a process of becoming rather than being, as the self which emerges in the space between one and the other via 'intra-action' (Barad, 2007), and as the productive entwinement of subjectivities in sociocultural matter – I explore the affective experiences of the state's recognition of one's chosen gender identity. In particular, my presentation will focus on trans individuals in the Norwegian context, given the welfare state's reputation of gender egalitarianism, and the implicit promise for trans equality such this carries. I draw on the interviews I conducted with individuals who changed legal gender following the law's implementation, and the diversity of responses they shared to how it had impacted upon their lives, to investigate why legal recognition of one's chosen gender can prove both liberating and debilitating. In doing so, I seek to address the limitations of state recognition in trans materialisation, by considering how socio-legal interpretations of affect contradict the messy, tangled queerness of trans experiences.

*Note: I am currently a doctoral candidate in Gender Studies at NTNU but my contract (and thus doctoral project) finishes in late June this year. However, I would still like to be considered for presenting at the conference, assuming there is no fee (or that it is small). Thanks!