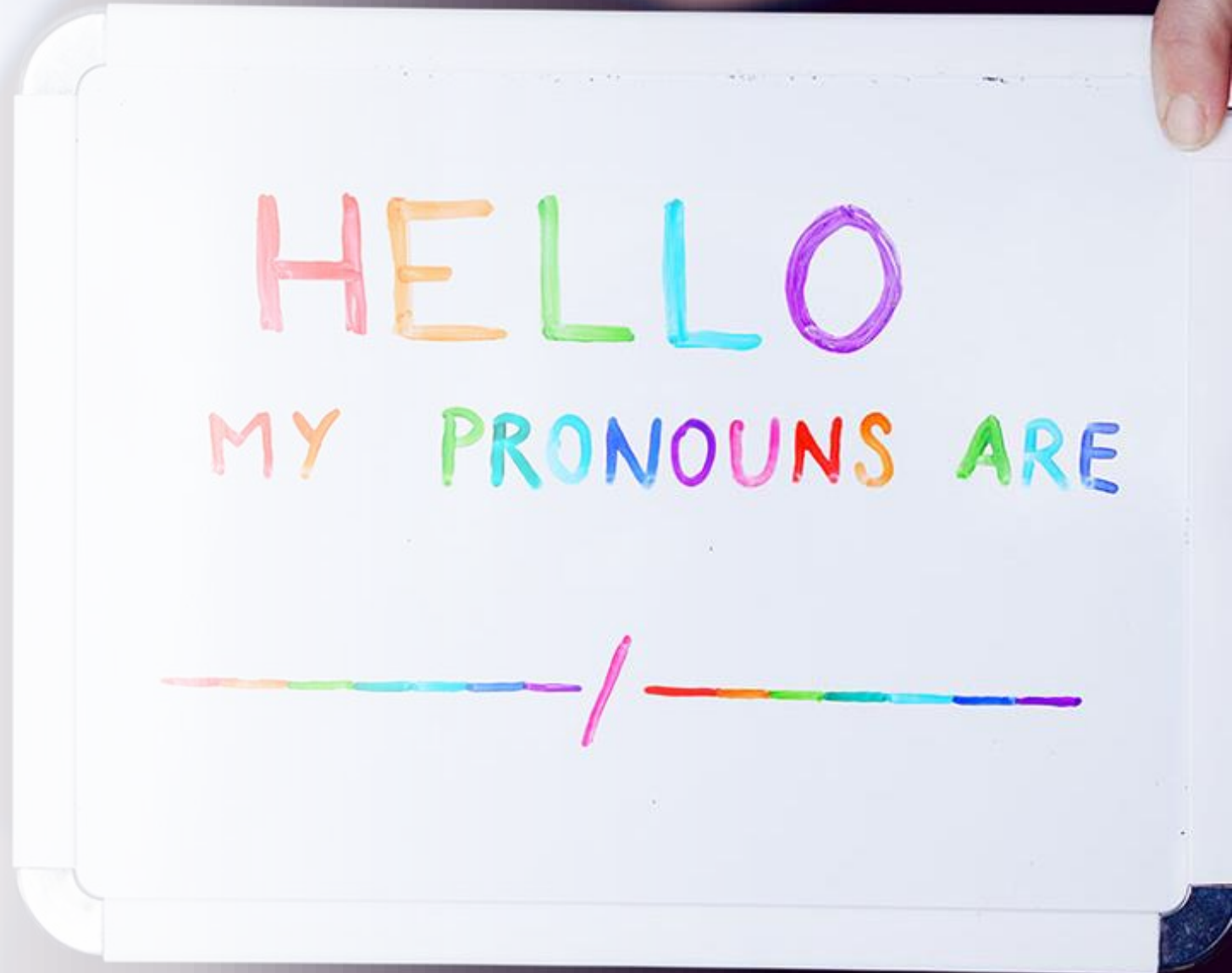
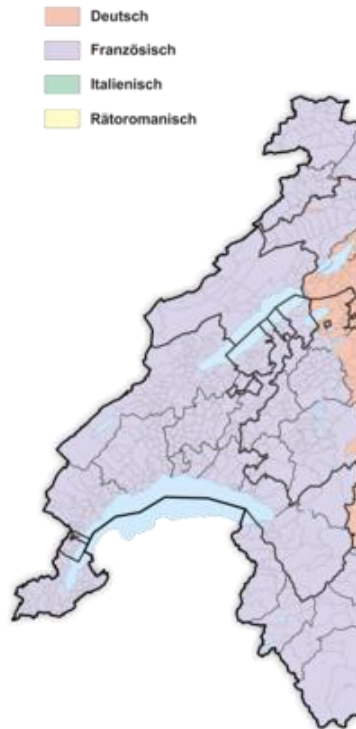


Pronouns in Motion

Pronoun variability among Swiss non-binary individuals



Social context



Nemo gewinnt Contest» 2024

MEDIENMITTEILUNG 12.05.2024

Die Schweiz hat sich beim größten Wettbewerb der Welt durchgesetzt: Das 24-jährige Musikprojekt Nemo hat den Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) 2024 gewonnen.



Copyright: Corinne Cumming/EBU



15:12

Debatte um drittes Geschlecht: Was heisst es, nichtbinär zu sein?

Aus News Plus vom 13.05.2024.
Bild: Imago

News > Schweiz >

Sieg von Nemo am ESC

They, xier, en: Wie soll ich non-binäre Menschen ansprechen?

Nemos Sieg am Eurovision Song Contest rückt ein Thema in den Fokus: Wie spricht man mit oder über Menschen, die sich als nichtbinär definieren? Eine Spurensuche gegen die Sprachlosigkeit.



on winner:
fight for
ople



(Forced) Pronoun flexibility

Context-dependent variation in gendered language:

- “true transsexual” (Borba, 2019)
- closet pronouns (Conrod, 2019)
- pronouns during transition (Zimman, 2019)

Non-binary pronouns and mental well-being (e.g., Ott et al., 2017; Testa et al., 2017)

Study objectives

1. Elucidate the factors influencing the pronoun usage of non-binary people residing in Switzerland.
2. Discern the implications of pronoun variability for our understanding of the inherent nature of pronouns.
3. Explore the real-life impacts of modern pronoun-sharing practices on the lives of non-binary individuals.

Study objectives

1. Elucidate the factors influencing the pronoun usage of non-binary people residing in Switzerland.
2. Discern the implications of pronoun variability for our understanding of the inherent nature of pronouns.
3. **Explore the real-life impacts of modern pronoun-sharing practices on the lives of non-binary individuals.**

Methods: Data collection

Data collection:

- survey
- focus groups

Situation 1

Du bist auf einer grossen Hochzeit deines Cousins (oder eines anderen Verwandten). Du sitzt an einem Tisch mit Mitgliedern deiner engeren und weiteren Familie und unterhältst dich bei einem guten Essen.

1. Welche Pronomen nutzt Du in dieser Situation?

Bitte gib die Pronomen in der/den Sprache(n) an, in der/denen diese Interaktion in deinem Alltag normalerweise stattfinden würde.

2. Wenn eine der anwesenden Personen die falschen Pronomen für Dich verwenden würde, würdest Du sie korrigieren?

Ja

Nein

Es kommt darauf an

Ich weiss es nicht

3. Gibt es etwas besonderes an dieser Situation, das Deine Pronomengebrauch beeinflussen würde?

4. Gibt es sonst noch etwas, das Du zu dieser Situation sagen möchtest?

Methods: Data collection

Data collection:

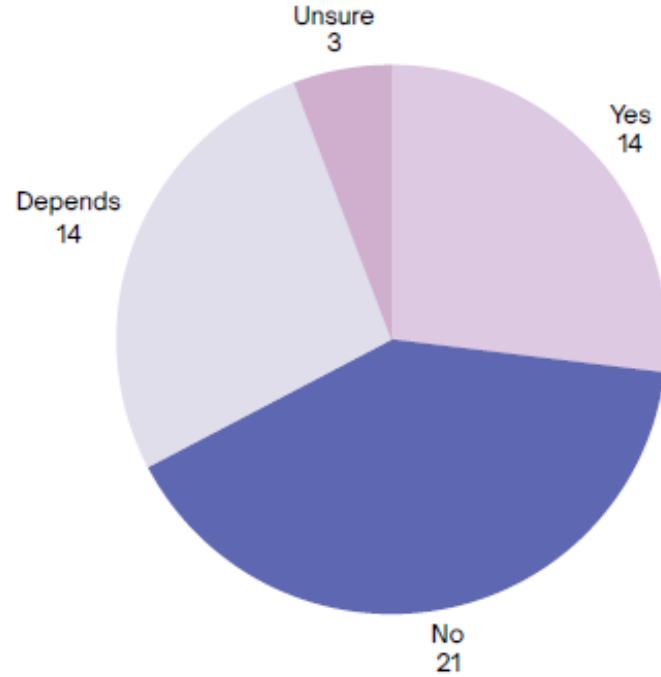
- survey: 49 valid responses
- focus groups: 10 participants, 112 min of spoken data

Focus groups thematic blocs:

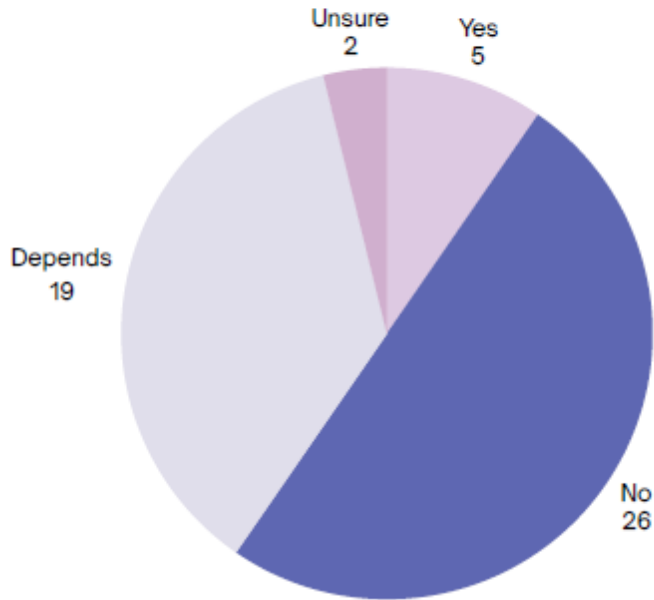
1. Perceived attitudes of interlocutors towards non-standard pronoun use
2. Pronoun-sharing practices
3. Perceived (non-)inherent nature of pronouns

Data: Pronoun Variation

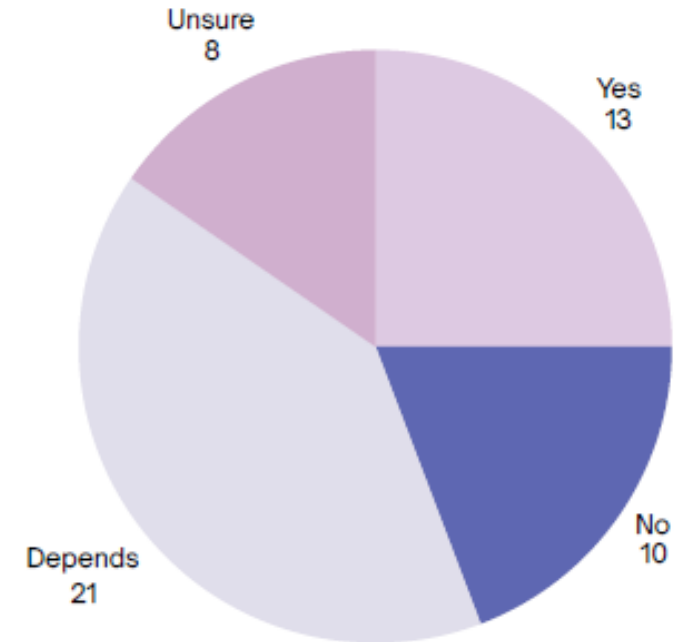
WORK: COWORKERS AND BOSS



**FAMILY WEDDING: IMMEDIATE
AND EXTENDED FAMILY**

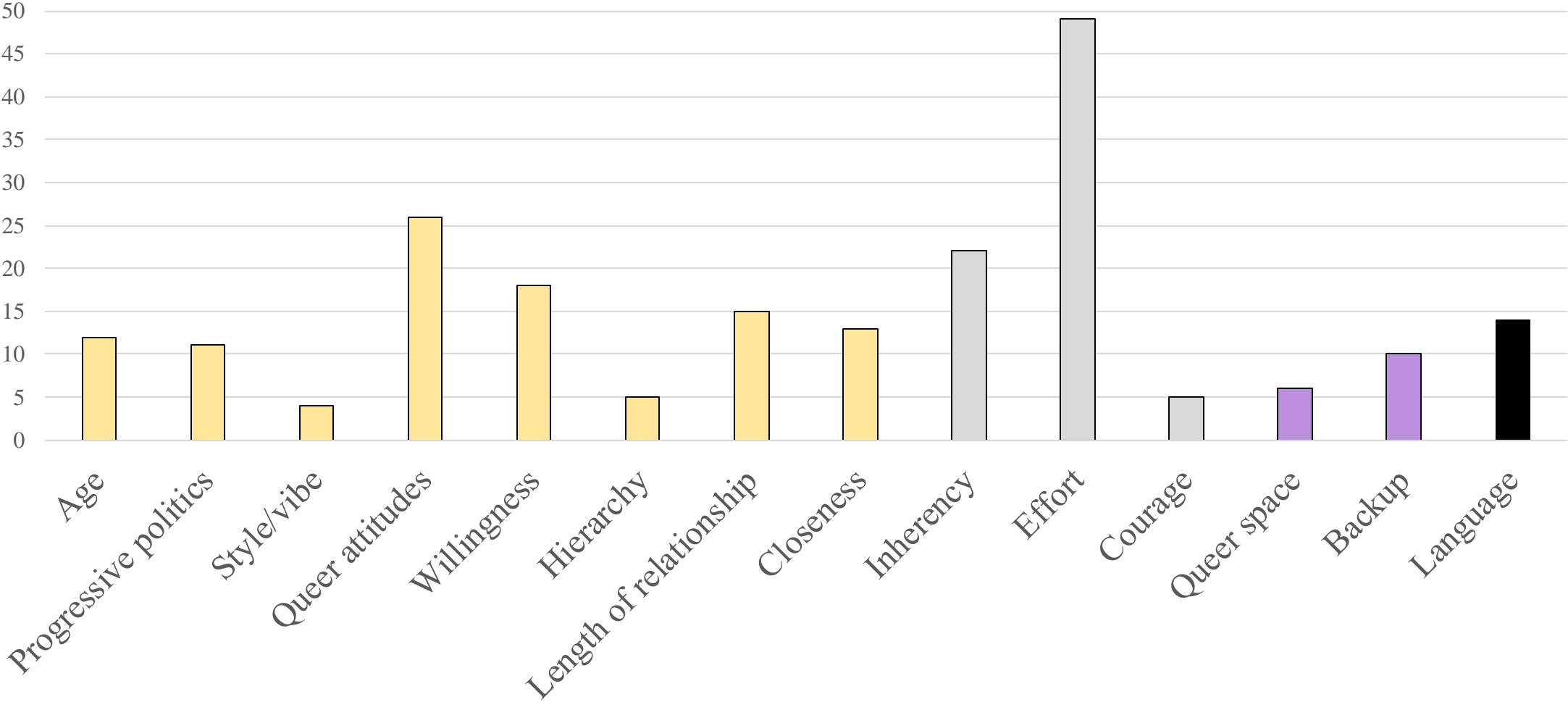


SOCIAL: FRIENDS AND STRANGERS



Data: Factors

Interlocutor Self Setting Language



Analysis: Markedness

- **Spotlight:** a marked way of coming-out can put the focus on the non-binary person and place them in a “non-binary ambassador” role.

Analysis: Spotlight

also mini lösing bisher isch halt eifach gseh ds ih denn gfunde han guet ih benutze halt eifach mänliche pronome weil es isch mir lieber als wiebliche pronome d lüt verstönd was es isch sie schaffe es mängisch au nöd- oft au nöd aber es isch wie eifacher zu das lehre also es isch sicher nöd ä gueti lösing fürd zuekunft

well, my solution so far has simply been that I decided ok I will just use masculine pronouns because I prefer them to feminine pronouns people understand what it is sometimes they don't manage- often they don't but it's easier to teach it's certainly not a good solution for the future

Analysis: Markedness

- **Spotlight:** a marked way of coming-out can put the focus on the non-binary person and place them in a “non-binary ambassador” role.
- **Pronoun rounds as a solution** of coming-out markedness: providing a designated space for stating one’s pronouns.
- **Other pronoun sharing practices**
 - Laminated name-tags
 - Online profiles

Analysis: Condition paradox

- Conditions of introduction rounds: inclusion of the pronouns mandatory or optional
 - **Mandatory:** might cause some people to either misgender themselves or have to out themselves in a possibly unfamiliar/uncomfortable setting.
 - **Optional:** if non-cis people are the only people including pronouns (and cis people skip/forget), the pronoun round does not fulfill its normalizing function.

Analysis: Condition paradox

P1: wenns an mir liegt z sägä ah ja mä chönnt no pronome sägä wenn mä wott denn findihs wie- also denn ischs wie unsafe und isch wie ou nid so fair

P2: aber denn au als vorschlag oder also nid ds ä person wük füre stait u sait jede muess d name sägä u- wenn die person wott no öppis über sich oder pronome- so chli ih finds- ih ha ds so chli mit möglichkeit gmaint (...)

P1: ja voll also zwang sotts ja nie si

P1: if it's up to me to say oh yeah we could also mention pronouns if you want then I find it like— well, then it feels unsafe and also kind of unfair

P2: but also as a suggestion, right like, not that a person really stands up and says everyone has to say their name and— if the person wants to add something about themselves or pronouns— kind of, I find it— I meant it more as a possibility. (...)

P1: yeah, totally, it should never be forced.

Analysis: Pressure

Ja ih gloub ih füehle mi ou grundsätzlach sicherer wennis irgendwie es thema isch ou wennis haut unangenehm isch wenn ih mi irgendwie muess oute

I think I generally feel safer when it's somehow brought up, even if it's uncomfortable when I have to out myself in a way

- Safe space/ “safe” people
- Normalizing
- Pronouns changing/inbetween
- Either outing or misgendering
 - Little room for pronoun variability

Conclusions

- The data shows **situational variation** in pronoun usage. Even though, in line with reviewed literature (e.g. Conrod, 2019), **safety** is one of the main factors influencing pronoun variation, it is **not the only one** at play.
 - **Effort** is mentioned with a similar frequency
- While pronoun rounds are often perceived as a helpful tool in fostering gender inclusivity, our data complicates this assumption, highlighting that **the outcomes may vary depending on various factors.**

Future research

- Investigate what pronoun sharing practices could be more inclusive to non-binary people.
- Continue investigating other non-English speaking contexts.
- Investigate other factors: “out” time.

Thank you!

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References

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- Conrod, K. (2019). *Pronouns Raising and Emerging*. (Unpublished PhD Dissertation). University of Washington.
- Zimman, L. (2019). Trans self-identification and the language of neoliberal selfhood: Agency, power, and the limits of monologic discourse. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 2019(256), 147–175. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2018-2016>

Pictures

- <https://www.thepinknews.com/2024/05/13/eurovision-winner-nemo-non-binary-flag-double-standard/>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages_of_Switzerland
- <https://www.srgssr.ch/de/news-medien/news/nemo-gewinnt-den-eurovision-song-contest-2024#:~:text=Die%20Schweiz%20hat%20sich%20beim,Malm%C3%B6%2C%20Schweden%20den%20ersten%20Platz.>
- <https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/identities/eurovision-winner-nemo-and-the-fight-for-non-binary-people/77441834#:~:text=The%20Swiss%20musician%2C%20who%20does n,meet%20Justice%20Minister%20Beat%20Jans.>
- <https://www.srf.ch/news/schweiz/sieg-von-nemo-am-esc-they-xier-en-wie-soll-ich-non-binaere-menschen-ansprechen>
- <https://www.ispcc.ie/what-does-it-mean-to-be-non-binary/>