# The figure of the Continuum – Illuminating Gender, Migration, Space, Border, Culture, and Time[1]

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**Abstract:**

This article shows how the figure of the Continuum can describe pluralities not only in the realm of sex/gender, but also in that of migration, space, border, culture, and time using the four dimensions of the Continuum: physical/body/matter – psychological/feeling/experience – social/behaviour/doing – sexual/sexual orientation/desire. In the first part of the article the figure of the Continuum will be described in its origination and summarised in its application to the concepts of gender and migration. The second part of the article will shine a first light on the application of the figure of the Continuum to the concepts of space, border, culture, and time. The article considers the question of the dissolution of binarities by the figure of the Continuum, as well as the question of the meanings and consequences of categorial systems of order. The musings of the article result in the notion that a more wide-spread application of the figure of the Continuum could inspire a new, broader humanism, and thus be understood as a basis for further reflections working towards an overstepping of post- and transhumanistic approaches.

**Keywords:** Continuum, Gender, Migration, Space, Border, Culture, Time

## Conception of a new figure of thinking: the figure of the Continuum

An initial answer to the question of how trans- and inter-gender, transity and interity,[2] still frequently referred to as intersex and transgender[3], can be conceived of as equitable genders together with and *no longer between* the two genders "female" and "male", is offered by the figure of the Continuum, first developed in 2014 (see Baltes-Löhr 2018b; 2018c; 2018d). If the figure of the Continuum *no longer* views transity and interity as an "in-between", *no longer* views them as a derivative or a mixture, a third or fourth or fifth figuration of "female" and "male", then the two genders "female" and "male" are thus being deprived of their ordering power. In this way, as well, their alleged unambiguity is being questioned. Notions of continua (Röder 2014, 14-40), which are viewed as merely being situated *between* two powerful poles, will inevitably lead to a strengthening of the poles "female" and "male", especially concerning their function as border and framework of a gender order, which ultimately results in a solidification of binary, bipolar, antagonistic and frequently dichotomous patterns. Phrased differently: the two poles "female" and "male", which are

still virulent in the current gender order, can be dissolved using the figure of the Continuum. "Female" and "male" will no longer be regarded as a binary framework for all kinds of in-between, third or even fourth, and all hitherto unnamed and unknown genders. The dissolution of the binary gender order using the figure of the Continuum thus also includes the dissolution of the notion of antagonistically situated genders which seem to irredeemably oppose each other, just as it radically questions the still virulent dichotomies, power balances between the genders "female" and "male", but also the dichotomy – and this point is often neglected in observations of gender diversity – which is still and again pervasive between "female-male" on the one side, which is deciding norms and frameworks, and all other genders on the other side, which is so far mostly being put up with, tolerated. The figure of the Continuum is working to make all relationships of power between gender groups recognisable as constructed, and thus as changeable.

If binary logics create, as antagonistic and dichotomous logics do, a solidification of strongly virulent bipolarities, then an "I" conceived within a binary logic cannot become a "You"; similarly, the "We" stays amongst itself and oftentimes feels superior to the "You", a fact which has been demonstrated with alarming, and for many people life-threatening, clarity by the refugee and migration debate that has been increasing in unwelcoming severity since 2015. "Inside" can, in a binary, antagonistic, dichotomous logic, not be "outside", the "centre" cannot be "periphery", the "here" cannot be "there", "strange" cannot be "familiar"; "today" precludes "tomorrow", just as "high culture" precludes supposedly "popular" cultural artefacts.

The inevitable question arises of what could replace this binary thinking in order to, for example, capture possible connections or similarities between the seemingly opposed, but also to adequately depict the actual diversities of human existences. The question of the dissolution of binary thinking is accompanied by the understanding of the necessity of opening sharp categorial separations. Permeability and porosity of dividing lines, perimeters, borders are emphasised. Fluidities of any subjects no longer have to be deviant exceptions of a norm which oftentimes seems natural, but can be regarded as one of many possible normalities. And this is exactly where the figure of the Continuum can be applied.

Before this figure is explained and applied to gender, migration, space, border, culture, and time later in this article, the author would like to record some interesting results obtained in the current semester at the University of Luxembourg. In a seminar with the title "Just what is transity, femininity, interity, masculinity? Gender plurality from a historical perspective", the question "What do you think of when you hear: loud, delicate, beautiful, central, pleasant, funny, dark, inside, right and black" was posed to 44 students. The answers included binary poles only in the categories beautiful, pleasant, dark, inside, right and black. It is especially notable that students answered "ugly" for "beautiful" only once, "unpleasant" to "pleasant" twice, "light" to "dark" five times, "outside" to "inside" six times, "white" to "black" seven times, and that "wrong" was connoted to "right" 19 times. This allows a first conclusion that students act within binary thinking especially when normativity, for example of right and wrong, is implied in the question. One could further surmise,

then, that normativity reinforces itself. Without wanting to push the results of this small survey, the students' answers to a second round of questions will be briefly explained. The second question to the students read: "What do you think of when you hear gender, interity, female, male, transity and genderless". If the dualism of "female-male" was mentioned 16 times in relation to gender, and the term transgender once, then "female" was associated with nature, tender, figure, attractive, and pink; "male" was connoted with strength, rough, beard, unattractive, and the colour blue. Another binarity was mentioned with the opposition of "transity" and "interity". It is striking that the students, when answering the question "What do you think of when you hear transity" answered only four times that they had never heard of the concept; for the question of interity, 20 students replied they were unfamiliar with the term – exactly as many as those who had never encountered the term "genderless"[4]. Finally, it should be noted that binarity is mainly an association when questions of normativity, such as the question of right or wrong, are concerned, and that female and male are still stuck in a strictly binary corset.

**The figure of the Continuum**

The figure of the Continuum comprises the four dimensions physical/body/matter, psychological/feelings/experiences, social/behaviour/doing and sexual/sexual orientation/desire. In all four dimensions, constant shifts, overlappings, similarities, differences, changes and stabilisations can be located on a horizontal level. Additionally, the four dimensions relate to one another in infinite, constantly changing combinations on a vertical axis.

On the horizontal level of any of these four dimensions variabilities can be described, if, for example, the categorial borders between so-called external gender markers such as penis, clitoris and vagina become permeable in the physical dimension; this means that, for instance, a so-called micropenis exhibited by a newborn child does not result in a so-called sex reassignment surgery to create a neo-vagina in order to disambiguate the gender of the newborn as "female". In the same vein, single aspects of the respective dimension can hold more or less significance in different moments of a biographical life. The same can be said on a diachronic time axis, which means that, in different historical moments and/or epochs, the respective aspects of the respective dimensions can be allocated very different meanings, as for example concerning sexual desire, when heterosexual structures of desire, in a certain epoch, are considered normal, and homoerotic desires are regarded as deviant.

On a vertical level, these four dimensions can occur in a myriad of different combinations, which means that at a certain point in time X a person can exhibit a specific behaviour in the social dimension, which is attributed by society to the gender "male", but the person possesses so-called morphologically female gender markers, like a projecting bosom and a vagina; they may, however, feel indifferent about their gender and live within pansexual structures of desire, all of which may be configured differently at a different point in their life.

In summary it can be said that variabilities, which are accompanied by a constant shift of categorial borders, are exhibited in all four dimensions.

In addition, concerning the bipolarities which can be dissolved using the figure of the Continuum, different polarities are identifiable on a biographical and diachronic level at different moments in time, which is described by the term "polypolarities". For gender, migration, space, border, culture, and time, the figure of the Continuum can describe, for example, which genders, at which points in time, were poles specifying norms; which forms of migration were attributed which individual or social meanings; which spaces, for example social, virtual or political are of which significance for individuals or social groups; and how, for example, certain forms of cultural expression come into the foreground and influence the behaviour of individuals, social groups or societies.

The figure of the Continuum is also suited to depict that and how everything is connected to everything (see Baltes-Löhr 2018e), so that actually existing pluralities can be described not only concerning gender, but also migration, space, border, culture, and time.

### Gender and migration as a Continuum[5]

As gender and migration as a Continuum have been described in detail in the two articles "What Are We Speaking About When We Speak About Gender? Gender as a Continuum"[6] and "The Figure of the Continuum: Discussed in Relation to the Quantum Logic and Exemplified for the Categories "Sex/Gender" and "Migration" (Baltes-Löhr 2018e), in this article the following overviews will give a short summary of their contents.

### First Overview: Gender as a Continuum

| Figure of the Continuum | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sex/Gender | | | |
| Transity | Interity | Masculinity | Femininity |
| **Dimensions** | **Examples** | | |
| Physical/corporeality/matter | Biological gender; sex<br>Examples:<br>Ambiguous attribution of physical traits to ONE gender | | |
| Psychological/feeling/experience | Experienced gender; gender identity<br>Examples:<br>Self-assignment ≠ assignment by others;<br>Situationally variant: assignment of a gender at birth ≠ self-assignment | | |
| Social/behaviour | Social gender; gender; gender-appropriate behaviour<br>Examples:<br>Girls/women and boys/men do not behave according to the | | |

| | |
|---|---|
| | stereotypes ascribed to these to genders; Trans and inter persons likewise do not behave according to binary stereotypes |
| Sexual/desire | Sexuality; sexual desire; sexual orientation Examples: Sexual orientations and sexual practices, as well as social relationships based on them, cannot be described within the patterns of a heterosexual structure of desire |
| *Boundaries and unambiguities shift* within the respective dimensions (*horizontal, intradimensional variability*) between the respective dimensions (*vertical, interdimensional variability*) | |
| *Polypolarities* Positionings of genders can exist beyond the two poles of "femininity" and "masculinity" Within one gender category, one or another dimension, at a specific point in time, in a specific situation and/or in a specific cultural context, may become more or less relevant | |
| *Diachronic, biographical and cultural variabilities and polypolarities* The complexity of gender as a continuum may vary depending on personal age and contemporary history, as well as on cultural settings | |
| Gender as a continuum is always embedded in an *intersectional perspective* of importance are age, cultural/ethnic origin, socio-economic status, social environment, religious and political convictions | |
| *Gender as a continuum* *conduces the depiction and analysis of lived and experienced pluralities of gender* | |

Fig. 1: Tabular overview of "Gender as a Continuum" (Baltes-Löhr 2018a, 9; Baltes-Löhr 2018e, 147)


**Second Overview: Migration as a Continuum**

| Figure of the continuum | |
|---|---|
| Migration | |
| **Dimensions** | **Examples** |
| Physical/matter | Forms of movements Examples: Movement between places with longer or shorter periods of settlement and longer or shorter distances between the places, Emigration, Immigration, Re-migration, circulary star-migration with or without a center, temporary, seasonal migration, voluntary migration, forced migration, exile, displacement, flight, The differentiation between human beings on the move and |

| | settled human beings is ambiguous |
|---|---|
| Psychological/feeling/experience | Experienced migration; migratory identity<br>Examples:<br>Self-assignment ≠ assignment by others; feeling of being integrated does not necessarily depend on being a migrant or a native in a given national state/society; feeling of being considered as migrant by others can depending on situations and biographical periods |
| Social/behaviour | Migration-related and/or appropriate behaviour<br>Examples:<br>Migrants do not behave according to the stereotypes ascribed to these related to their status as migrants;<br>Migrants do not behave according to binary stereotypes |
| Desire | Reasons for migration<br>Examples:<br>Variation of reasons for migration: AUFZÄHLEN |
| *Boundaries and unambiguities shift*<br>within the respective dimensions (*horizontal, intradimensional variability*)<br>between the respective dimensions (*vertical, interdimensional variability*) | |
| *Polypolarities*<br>Positionings of human beings on the move can exist beyond the two poles of "migration" and "sedentarism"<br>Within different forms of movement, one or another dimension, at a specific point in time, in a specific situation and/or in a specific cultural context, may become more or less relevant | |
| *Diachronic, biographical and cultural variabilities and polypolarities*<br>The complexity of migration as a continuum may vary depending on personal age and contemporary history, as well as on cultural settings | |
| Migration as a continuum<br>is always embedded in an *intersectional perspective*<br>Of importance are age, cultural/ethnic origin, socio-economic status, social environment, religious and political convictions | |
| *Migration as a continuum*<br>*conduces the depiction and analysis of lived and experienced pluralities of forms, feelings, behavior and desire to migrate* | |

Fig. 2: Tabular overview of "Migration as a Continuum" (Baltes-Löhr 2018e, 153)

**Space as a Continuum**

In the western European and anglo-saxon area, the general understanding of space until the 1970s was characterized by the fact that spaces, just as gender, were regarded as nature-given. Spaces were thought as geographical or material items or entities. They were considered measurable, completely neutral, one could also say: apolitical, meaning that every individual and/or group of individuals were neither advantaged nor disadvantaged by spaces. Such notions of space determined, among others, a seemingly clear "inside and outside" as well as the "belonging and strangeness". Borders possessed an eminently important function within such an understanding of space.

In 1974, Henri Lefebvre established the notion of the social production of space, and the production of social space, with his work "Production de l'espace" (Lefebvre 1974; see Shields 1997, 186-202; Baltes-Löhr 2000, 513-524). With this innovative conception, spaces are no longer viewed as nature-given, but as produced, manufactured, named and encoded. Codes, the "keys" to different spaces, are neither known to all persons or groups of persons, nor accessible and thus not manageable. Together with those encodings and the availability of the codes, certain spaces are only accessible and utilizable by and for certain persons or groups of persons. Thus, government buildings, seat of democratically elected parliaments, are to this day made into spaces which are not easily accessible by citizens; this is demonstrated very clearly by the term "no-protest zone" (German: Bannmeile).[7]

Encodings, the denominations of spaces, show customary practices of space, respective forms of representation as well as spatially imagined geographies. However, not all practices existing within a space are described by the codes, the denominations. Structures of power and sovereignty influence the encoding of spaces, so that the notions of space which are close to power and sovereignty, which are compatible with and useful to them, are depicted – and others are not.

In regards to the four dimensions of space as a continuum, the physical/material dimension can be thought of as spatial matter. This includes geographical spaces, interior and exterior spaces as well as near and far spaces, cultural and natural spaces, private and public spaces, social and individual spaces, as well as safe and dangerous spaces, but also virtual and imagined spaces. The psychological, felt/experienced dimension of space encompasses the feelings of belonging of persons and groups of persons to certain spaces; however, as with gender and migration as a Continuum, one must distinguish between self-attribution of belonging and its attribution by others, and the connected feelings about certain spaces. The social dimension of space comprises the manifestations and forms of the respective social behaviour connoted to and expected from certain spaces. These connotations and expectations, in turn, have an influence and effects on the constitution of the space(s), whether they be virtual or matter-bound. The social dimension of space as a Continuum refers to notions of space, as exhibited for example with the term "diaspora", when groups which could be called under-represented create "their own world" within certain spaces, with its own set of rules, codes of conduct and intentional spatial and social boundaries to the respective environment. This could also be proved in detail for the so-called Amish people and different forms

of subcultures (see Schwendter 1993). The fourth dimension of desire of space as a continuum pertains to spaces which are striven for or desired, whether they are spaces in virtual worlds, as can increasingly be observed in video games, or material spaces which are desired and striven for, or left, to different extents in, for example, migratory movements.

For space as a Continuum, as well, variabilities within each of the four dimensions of space are identifiable: a myriad of different figurations of material, social and virtual spaces have to be considered, as well as variable feelings of belonging to and behaviour in spaces. A variety of different desires regarding spaces, to which persons or groups of persons desire access or wish for a stay. These variabilities are configured differently at different times on a diachronic axis, just as all possible variations in the four dimensions of space as a Continuum can be allotted very different meanings and emphases over the course of an individual life.

Such intracategorial variabilities show that that which, for example, is considered physical space, is diverse. Thus, a geographically measured and measurable material item can be labelled very differently: the country of origin for some, for example Portugal, is the country of arrival for others, for example migrants from Mozambique or Russia. Geographical areas can be viewed as zones of passage or transit, or as spaces of national states. In addition, the usage of material spaces is very variable in the dimension of social behaviour.

On a diachronic axis of time, one can also observe a pronounced variability, for example when examining the biographical span of a life. A place of birth may, over the course of a person's life, possibly hold a more or less changed meaning for the person who was born there, but also for those persons who live there for a certain period of time. Viewed from a historical axis it becomes clear that spaces are given different names during different eras, as for example the "India" travelled by Columbus, which only became America after the journeys and measurements of Amerigo Vespucci (Ugolini 1974). However, the meaning of consistently denominated spaces can change over the course of human history, as is exhibited by the examples of rock cliffs and peaks as well as caves. Not least, the cultural context regarding the variability of space as conceived of on a continuum plays a remarkable role, as can be illustrated with the meaning of the word "home" (German: Heimat).

In addition, a varying connection of the four dimensions to each other can be discerned when material as well as virtual, physical spaces, social spaces, corresponding feelings of belonging, codes of conduct and desire – which can vary in itself – to choose a certain space or spaces or to, for example, belong to social spaces, determines the everyday lives of people. Physical, social, virtual, imagined, desired spaces cannot be clearly and unambiguously delimited within themselves and from each other. Thus, the material space of a church, for example, holds completely different meanings for different people: as a place of contemplation, as a last refuge, as an architectural marvel, or as a source of annoyance because of wasteful spending, connected to the costs of construction and maintenance, especially in times of extreme crises for large parts of the population. Similar

examples could be examined for toilets, beaches, school buildings, universities, parliament buildings, and skyscrapers.

Polypolarities of space as a Continuum are exhibited when centre and periphery shift towards each other, just as an East-West antagonism held until the late 1980s. So-called third countries, developing or emerging countries have, in the last three decades, increasingly become powerful centres, as can be shown by the example of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, the co-called BRICS states. Interior and exterior spaces are delimited less clearly, as can be proven by the current debate within the EU about the significance of the external borders of the EU. Virtual, imagined spaces are increasingly, and not least due to technological developments, gaining importance within borders of physical spaces, which themselves are not or cannot always be clearly defined, and which will be more closely examined in the following section.

**Border as a Continuum**

Borders, demarcations come up in every concept – gender, migration and space – and will be briefly investigated in this passage (see Baltes-Löhr 2003, 83-99).

In regards to the physical/material dimension of border as a Continuum a variety of forms and manifestations can be addressed: borders of space, time, corporal borders, interpersonal, social, political borders. Borders are connected to categories and normalisations and are thus used as instruments of in- and exclusion. Borders localise spaces, places, differentiate between here and there. The psychological/felt/experienced dimension of gender is mostly concerned with the felt meaning and acceptance of borders and the related *in*clusion of self and *ex*clusion of others. Thus, the "I" can find itself amongst many "others" on one side of the border. In the social dimension of border as a Continuum behaviours or feelings which are seemingly delimited within themselves and from each other, and which are associated with, for example, a certain geographical space or a group of migrants or the members of a gender group, are recorded and distinguished from each other. The dimension of desire of border as a Continuum pertains to "striven for" borders, which means, which borders, delimitations and demarcations are desired, needed by persons, groups of persons or societies to outline themselves and/or to exclude themselves from others or include themselves with others. However, the desire to expand, to shift, to overcome borders, of any kind and manifestation, or to replace them with new borders is also described by this dimension. The notion of border as a Continuum is defined, as well, by the horizontal variabilities within the respective dimensions, as well as the vertical variability, the shifts of the dimensions in relation to each other. Borders can appear polypolar, when, for example, in one situation the separating aspect of borders is highlighted, and in another situation the connecting aspect. Thus, on the one hand, borders separate; however, borders, and especially border zones, also facilitate encounters. "In the border areas emerges the interesting and excitingly new that is needed in our time." (Hofer 1980, 13) Borders are also at home in the figure of the Third, in the notion of the "Third Space" and the "in-between" (Bhabha 1994).

The in-between, however, stays delimited on all sides, and the third only comes after the first and second. The third is trailing behind the first and the second, rarely is it thought of as leading. The person on the third step of the winner's podium does not receive a medal made from gold or silver, but one made from bronze. And without the second and third place, the first could not be imagined. Thus, the figure of the Third strengthens binarity, for example considering *gender*, more than it expands it. The same can be said of the notions of Third Space; this concept does not question the hierarchisations of traditional orders of space, but rather cements them, for example when we still speak of so-called "third" or "third-world countries" and the border area, on the one hand, opens a place of possible encounters, but on the other hand inherently stabilises the borders on both sides of the border area.

The notion of border as a Continuum is meant to reveal the constructedness of borders as well as their diversity and changeability, but especially their ambiguities and lack of clarity. Thus, borders between nation states, for example, are denoted with a clear line on maps, which has none of this clarity whatsoever in the geographical space. The marking of shores of rivers, lakes or oceans, as well, seems to be unambiguous as a drawn border. If one however looks at a river bank, the shore of a lake or the seashore, it becomes more than clear how these seemingly unambiguous delimitations are in constant movement. The ambiguity of border markings and border lines, which frequently take the shape of categorial systems, also becomes clear in regards to gender, migration and space, when the borders between all genders are viewed as fluid rather than as stabilised manifestations and thus as irreversible, when interior and exterior spaces, centre and periphery cannot be clearly delimited and contained, when migration and sedentarism can flow into one another. This can also be the case for culture and time, which will be briefly explained in the following.

## Culture as a Continuum

If culture to this day is still conceived of as the "opponent" of nature, then this perceived opposition can be dissolved or at least mitigated using the figure of the Continuum, just as the perceived oppositions between high and mass culture, or seemingly homogenous cultures connected to national states.

Within the four dimensions of culture as a Continuum, the physical/material dimension of culture means all artefacts but also the influence that these artefacts have on the so-called nature, which constitutes a first step towards the dissolution of a binary border between culture and nature. The psychological dimension of culture is concerned with the belonging of persons, groups of persons, societies, nations and state groups to respective cultures – in connection with this the concept of cultural identity is often mentioned – which, however, are still frequently assigned a homogenisation not present in the actually existing plurality of ways of existence. The figure of the Continuum can show that *the* culture of, for example, a certain age group does not exist, just as *the* German, *the* European, *the* American, *the* female or *the* culture of elders does not exist. As discussed earlier (see Baltes-Löhr 2018e), it is also relevant for culture that categorial delimitations of, for

example, a so-called national culture from another will always mean that individual cultural forms of expression will fall by the wayside, and that connected behaviours, feelings, but also those persons who, in a certain way, express themselves culturally or feel connected to cultural forms of expression, will *not* be considered. The social dimension of culture as a Continuum pertains to the interactions of cultures and thus also to the behaviour of those persons or groups of persons who procure cultural expression, whether in words, images, theatre, art, or in everyday life.

The figure of the Continuum can also show in what ways external attributions and self-attributions of cultural belonging can correspond or diverge, but also in what way possibly still virulent stereotyping notions of cultural features are accurate – or not; not all Italians like to eat spaghetti, just as not every British person is a fan of tea. The dimension of desire describes which cultures, areas or certain aspects of cultural settings are considered desirable – or not; which desire is aimed at which cultures, cultural forms or manifestations. Just as with gender, migration, space and border it is relevant for culture as a Continuum that the four dimensions within themselves and in their relation to one another cannot be comprised unambiguously. Horizontal and vertical variabilities become apparent, and examples will be given at this juncture. The definitions of what constitutes culture, for instance, are more than diverse (Bachmann-Medick 2014; 2016). In the same vein, that which in one society might be considered extremely culturally valuable might be completely secondary, revolting or even taboo in another: pet dogs, pork roast, singing, fasting, diets, losing weight, education, fitness can be connoted entirely differently motivated and connoted. With regards to the biographical span of a life, as well, cultural customs and expressions have different meanings depending on a person's age, as is evident from the example of attending a funeral. Changes and shifts occur in different eras on a historical axis in regards to what is considered the predominant and accepted culture. But also the meaning of, for instance, artefacts can change over the course of human history, as can be demonstrated by the examples of prehistorical flint axe blades, written characters or also the notions of home (German: Heimat). Thus one can not only find a by now nearly incalculable diversity of definitions of culture, but also a variety of reasons for wanting to belong to a culture, however it might be defined, or to not want to belong to it; the togetherness of cultures is gaining an increasing connotation of diversity, as well.

If multiculturalism means the more or less contact-free coexistence of supposedly homogenous cultures, and interculturalism of the togetherness of cultures in which supposedly homogenous cultures meet and enrich one another, and if transculturalism means the reciprocal permeation of cultures, which can result in the construction of innovative cultural forms, then there exists here as well, for example in the assumption of transcultural encounters, room for homogenous cultural forms and manifestations, which cannot be the case in multicultural notions/approaches, and only partially in intercultural notions/approaches (Baltes-Löhr 2018f, 39-66). Byung-Chul Han has coined the term „hyperculturalism" (Han 2005); it describes the dissolution of borders and delimitations of different forms of culture which have emerged through cultural oppositions. He

speaks of the convergence and interconnectedness of the individual cultures, and thus comes closest to the notions of culture as a Continuum.

**Time as a Continuum**

Time, at first glance, is a very similar concept to the notion of an infinitely conceived continuum. If a physical/material dimension of time as a Continuum comprises the increments and units of time in seconds, minutes, hours, days, nights, months, years, decades, centuries, millennia as well as the separation into epochs, then the figure of the Continuum makes clear that these units are constructed, which means that these increments often do not correspond to the felt dimensions of time: concerning this, the debate within the European Union regarding the elimination or retention of the change between so-called winter and summer time introduced in 1980 is interesting to note. Terms like "blue hour" and "dusk" are also meaningful concerning the deprivation of the increments of their seeming clarity. In the felt dimension of time as a Continuum, two terms from Greek philosophy play an important role: "Chronos" describes these artificial increments of time created by humans, and "Kairos" the outstanding, deciding moments in this lifetime (Weinelt 2005). Does life seem to become more fast-paced because "Kairos", the moments of decision, are becoming increasingly varied and complex, and because "Chronos", the flow of time, seems more and more fragmented to us? What meaning does the felt time hold, when seconds seem to turn into minutes. When chronologically measured, short and shortest memories in time become bigger and are remembered as lasting longer and longer; this is relevant for moments of joy as well as for moments and feelings of deepest mourning, suffering or sadness. In the social dimension of time as a Continuum, the connotations of behaviour "fitting" for a certain time can be illustrated. Here, as well, the figure of the Continuum can dissolve the rigid borders of what belongs to certain moments, times (or not), and give space to the actually existing diversity of behaviours. The dimension of desire of time as a Continuum describes those aspects which are considered desirable – or not. Much potential as suggestions for the further development of the figure of the Continuum lies in expressions like: "the good old days", or "tomorrow is a new day", or "if only this moment would never end", or "every second of the birth of my child became seemingly unbearably long hours, which dissolved back into nothing immediately after the birth". For the notion of time as a Continuum, as well, one can demonstrate horizontal variabilities in all dimensions, as well as vertical variabilities in regards to shifts of the respective dimensions in relation to one another.

**Outlook**

This contribution was meant to illustrate that the figure of the Continuum could constitute an instrument to more accurately portray the complexity of, for example, gender, migration, space, border, culture and time. It opens the door for pluralities, without putting arbitrariness in place of excluding categorial delimitations. This does not only allow the perspective that categorial orders are constructed by humans, but also permits conceiving of the togetherness of perceived oppositions,

and may lead to the question if it is, or should be, not sufficient and especially fundamental to perceive a human as a human, before pigeonholing them into binary categories which can become life-threatening closed spaces? Are trans and intersex persons, women, men, migrants, stateless persons, artists not, first and foremost, to be viewed, recognised and treated as humans? Have denominations and the powers of space, borders and time not transitioned towards independence, which ascribes to them a seemingly natural status, and which frequently entails a binary corset? Are binary orders of gender, migration, space, borders and time to be considered for as fundamental a change as is achieved by quantum logic in physics, which dissolves binarities such as 0-1, describes superpositions and overlappings and the concept that a measurement evokes a subject in the first place?

In the author's opinion the necessity of such changes is evident and could be started by the figure of the Continuum, which allows to read various other concepts, such as age, health, work in a way that lets pluralities appear, that does not deprive complexities of their complexity, and that awards humans the inviolable right to human dignity regardless of the arbitrary location of their birth, regardless of the gender attributed to them by themselves or others, regardless of the space and the time in which they live. Thus, being born a human should be enough to be able to live and also die in humane conditions —— all of this in a diverse togetherness in orders that are democratic and constituted in solidarity, on the basis of the actual implementation of the sentence "Human dignity is inviolable" (German: "Die Würde des Menschen ist unantastbar"). Seemingly, natural homogenous orders in regards to gender, migration, space, border and time can be understood as an expression of political decisions and the transfer of frequently unreflected traditions using the figure of the Continuum. Thus, the application of the figure of the Continuum may harbour the chance to no longer speak of post- or transhumanism, but of a new, broader humanism. In this way, plurality could be understood not as a threat but as a potential enrichment and expansion of one's own individual, social and societal horizon. The seemingly infinite creative and innovative possibilities inherent in plurality, in gender, migration, space, border, culture, and time, could be exhausted and no longer be subject a binary, restricting order.

**Endnotes:**

1. Acknowledgements: My thanks go to Svantje Volkens for her support by translating this text and the accompanying discussions.
2. Terms developed in Baltes-Löhr 2018a, 1-32.
3. The terms "transity" and "interity" will be used in place of the former terms "transgender" and "intersex" throughout this article.
4. I would like to give my sincere thanks to the students of the seminar "Just what is transity, femininity, interity, masculinity? Genderplurality from a historical perspective" for their cooperative participation and the completion of the surveys.
5. For a detailed argumentation and illustration see: Baltes-Löhr 2018a and Baltes-Löhr 2018e.
6. See: Baltes-Löhr 2018a.
7. „As early as 1848, the Frankfurt Parliament banned protests in front of the parliament. In 1920, the Reichstag building was protected by law. In 1955, the Bundestag passed its own no-protest zone law.

After the move to the capital it turned into the mitigated "Law for pacified areas", and a criminal offence turned into an administrative offence." (see Deggerich 2009).

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