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RIGHT-WING POPULISM AND GENDER

EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES
AND BEYOND

[transcript] Gender Studies

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Right-Wing Populism and Gender European Perspectives and Beyond

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While research in right-wing populism has recently been blossoming, a systematic study of the intersection of right-wing populism and gender is still missing, even though gender issues are ubiquitous in discourses of the radical right ranging from »ethnosexism« against immigrants, to »anti-genderism.«

This volume shows that the intersectionality of gender, race and class is constitutional for radical right discourse. From different European perspectives, the contributions investigate the ways in which gender is used as a meta-language, strategic tool and »affective bridge« for ordering and hierarchizing political objectives in the discourse of the diverse actors of the »right-wing complex.«

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Right-Wing Populism and Gender: A Preliminary Cartography of an Emergent Field of Research

Gabriele Dietze and Julia Roth

Borrowing from Marx, we start our introductory remarks with the first words of the Communist Manifesto, 'A specter is haunting Europe': the specter of right-wing populism. This specter looks different everywhere, and it is also at home in other parts of the world, for example in the Americas, in India, in the Philippines. Some features appear in almost all places that are haunted by it: nativist ethnonationalism (Betz 2001), hostility towards elites (Canovan 1999), anti-pluralism (Müller 2017), or the opposition to immigration (Rydgren 2008). Other spectral attributes are context-specific: in Hungary, the government has closed down universities and abolished gender studies programs to impede 'foreign' influences; in Brazil, indigenous communities are expelled from their reclaimed land and excluded from political power; and the current US president wants to build a wall at the country's southern border as a protection against 'Mexican rapists.' Due to this oscillation of content and the lack of a consistent program, populism has been conceptualized as a 'thin centered ideology' (Mudde/Kaltwasser 2017: 6), to which diverse projects, convictions, and attitudes can cling and connect.

In any case, a common feature can be observed in all current versions of right-wing populism: an 'obsession with gender' and sexuality in different arenas. Populist actors conjure up the heteronormative nuclear family as the model of social organization, attack reproductive rights, question sex education, criticize a so-called 'gender ideology,' reject same-sex marriage and seek to re-install biologically understood binary gender differences. Although this 'obsession with gender' has become an omnipresent mark in right-wing discourse, canonical research has rarely addressed this aspect, nor has gender been considered as one of the major attributes for the attractiveness of populism. Rather, the success of right-wing populism is usually attributed and reduced to economic, nationalistic, or culturalist reasons and motivations (Brubaker 2017; Gidron/Hall 2017; Norris/Inglehart 2019) and seen as unrelated to gender. The Oxford Handbook of Populism's entry on Gender still argues that gender is not central to right-wing populism; however, the connection between the two is described as, admittedly, 'largely understudied' (Abi-Hassan 2017: 1).

By contrast, the authors of this collection assume that analyzing the increase and persuasiveness of right-wing populist tendencies is not possible without a gender perspective. Furthermore, we claim that an approach that encompasses gender as a social construction, as a social practice, as an axis of inequality, and as a link to the economic developments of neo-liberal globalization, poverty, and structural racism, is indispensable for understanding the political shift to the right. Consequently, an important dimension of right-wing populism research, for us, is the observation that populism is not only concerned with gender as an issue itself but also with gender as a meta-language for negotiating different conditions of inequality and power in the context of current struggles over hegemony, and over resources forged by neoliberalism.

Given that in the meantime numerous different modes of political objectives and utterances have by now been assembled under the umbrella term ‘right-wing populism,’ it seems productive to expand and elaborate on the concept. The essays assembled in this volume thus relate right-wing populism not only to parties, movements, or organizations, but also to media discourses, narratives, and forms of action. Therefore, the editors of this volume suggest to speak of a right-wing populist complex. Our notion of a ‘complex’ contains the older – but in many ways similar – phenomenon of right-wing extremism, as the chapter by Edma Ajanović, Stefanie Mayer, and Birgit Sauer shows. Furthermore, speaking of a right-wing populist complex also enables us to include religious fundamentalisms and formations of Catholicism as demonstrated by the contributions by Agnieszka Graff, Imke Schmincke, Cornelia Möser, and Roman Kuhar and Mojca Pajnik. Neither do we want to leave out certain fractions of mainstream feminism called ‘Femonationalism’ that partake in the stigmatization of male Muslim migrants – see the article by Niels Spierings – and refugees as a sexual threat to ‘autochthonous’ women (Hark/Villa 2017), discussed in the contributions by Julia Roth and Gabriele Dietze. And finally, it would be impossible to omit parts of the liberal bourgeois camp that have shifted from the middle ground to the right (Zick et. al. 2019) via their polemics against ‘genderism’ or and an alleged ‘censorship.’

A strong anti-gender sentiment is also pervasive in populist regimes in Latin America and parts of Eastern Europe, where a ‘gender ideology’ is perceived as a form of ‘ideological colonization’ pushed by Western decadent liberal voices from the EU and NGOs, who impose their thus-perceived ill-advised emancipation programs on poorer countries (Korolczuk/Graff 2018). The latter strand of politics is addressed in the essays by Roman Kuhar and Mojca Pajnik, Agnieszka Graff, and Eva Kováts. Additionally, we observe an appropriation of identity politics and some sort of ‘reverse anti-colonialism’ (see Roth’s contribution), according to which the victim’s perspective is reclaimed by structurally hegemonic speakers. The latter is particularly obvious in the case of extreme right-wing masculinist actors on the in-

ternet (such as online networks and producers), who are intensely hostile to gender issues, as Simon Strick's contribution illustrates.

The notion of a right-wing populist 'complex' allows us to connect different narratives relating to gender to various fields of inquiry. Thus, the chapters not only focus on actors or formations of the right-wing populist complex but also on the intersections of gender with other categories of social stratification such as race, ethnicity, class and religion. Hence, gender issues are structurally connected to globalization and the effects of gendered neoliberal transformations and encompass the question of pay and breadwinning as well as the international division of labor. The ways in which right-wing agents orchestrate the current shift to the right by the evocation of strong feelings provide a further important field of inquiry. Ruth Wodak, for instance, calls such affective strategies a Politics of Fear (Wodak 2015). Congruously, we add the crucial arenas of affect and emotion to the categories of gender, race, and class as the usual aspects of intersectional investigation. Because we think that sexuality is of major importance and plays a central role for mobilizing affects, we address this dimension separately (especially in the contributions by Patrick Wielowiejski, Möser, Schmincke, and Dietze).

Fields of Inquiry – Emergent Research

Although the field of inquiry 'right-wing populism and gender' is only just now beginning to emerge, we can draw on a number of pioneer publications: the special issue "Gender and the Populist Radical Right Politics" of the journal *Patterns of Prejudice* (Spierings et al. 2015) and the groundbreaking anthology *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe* (Bitzan/Kötting 2017) as well as Birgit Sauer's fundamental essay "Gesellschaftstheoretische Überlegungen zum europäischen Rechtspopulismus. Zum Erklärungspotenzial der Kategorie Geschlecht" (Social-theoretical Thoughts on European Right-Wing Populism: On the Explanatory Potential of the Category Gender, in English) promotes a gender perspective for research on right-wing populism (Sauer 2017); Sauer pursues this perspective also in her contribution to this volume. In addition, special issues of gender-theoretical journals have lately been published on specific topics of right-wing populism.¹

Feminist research has been dealing with women in the extreme right since early on, e.g. with women from the far-right in the KuKluxKlan (Blee 2008) or in

1 Internationally, special issues appeared in *Signs* (Spring 2019, vol. 44 no. 3, on 'Gender and the Rise of the Global Right') and *Women's Studies International Forum* (May-June 2018, vol. 68, on 'Feminisms in Times of Anti-Genderism, Racism and Austerity'), and *Feministische Studien* (Nov. 2018, vol. 36, no. 2, on the normalization of neo-reactionary policies).

a global perspective (Bacchetta/Power 2013), as well as in extremist parties (Amesberger/Halbmayer 2002; Birsl 2013; Bitzan 2017). We can further draw on a number of regional studies of particular national contexts on right-wing populism and gender,² as well as on the Pan-European study on right-wing women, *Triumph of the Women* (Gutsche 2018a), by the German Friedrich Ebert Foundation.³ Recent research indicates that ‘anti-genderism’ is not only a major issue for right-wing populism (Hark/Villa 2015; Brandini-Aissis/Ogando 2018), but that it can be seen as a wide-spread phenomenon (Kuhar/Paternotte 2017; Gunnarsson Payne 2019), and that the fight against ‘gender-ideology’ is a potential tool to construct the totalitarian idea of ‘people-as-one’ (Salcel 2004: 96).

The emergent field of research on right-wing populism and gender has a strong affinity with the already established research on masculinity related to the subject (Norocel 2010; Erzeel/Rashkova 2017; Kimmel 2017; Mudde/Kaltwasser 2015). The chapters by Simon Schleusener, Sauer, and Strick pursue this dimension. Here, the relationship of patriarchal gender relations and capitalist socialization and subjectivization is central, as it had formerly been discussed in feminist research as ‘capitalist patriarchy’ (Eisenstein 1979), ‘neopatriarchy,’ (Campbell 2014) and in reflections on ‘colonial patriarchy’ (Lugones 2012).

The recent victory of capitalist market mechanisms in almost all areas of daily life has also resulted in a ‘neoliberal equality’ of well-educated women (see the articles by Schleusener and Dietze), which is one of the economic premises of ‘femonationalisms’ (Farris 2017) and neoliberal feminisms (Rottenberg 2014; Fraser 2016; Banet-Weiser et al. 2019). In contrast to such ‘toxic feminisms’ (Thelander-sson 2014; Hark/Villa 2017), intersectional constellations of feminisms – that is, feminisms dedicated to the structural and inseparable entanglements of different axes of oppression and inequalities such as race, class, and gender – which practice a variety of forms of resistance against White mainstream feminisms, who often side with right-wingers in their anti-immigration stance. Intersectional feminists provide platforms against right-wing populism in the U.S. (Hess 2017; Draper/Mason-Deese 2018), in Latin America (Bidaseca/Loi 2017), and Europe (Wizorek 2014; Hark/Villa 2017), as the article by Roth illustrates.

Additionally, we want to emphasize the neoliberal revolution as a central backdrop of the right-wing populist complex and thus as one relevant field of research.

2 See for example from the Netherlands: de Lange; Mügge, 2015, 61-80; Scandinavia: Akkerman; Hagelund, 2007, 197-214; Meret; Siim, 2013, 78-96; Norocel, 2010, 170-183; Italy: Farris, 2017, and for France: Mayer, 2015, 391-414; Morgan, 2017, 887-906; Scrinzi, 2017, 87-101.

3 The study is also published in German: Gutsche, 2018b, Both, the English and the German version can be found online as pdf files: library.fes.de/pdf-files/dialog/h4636.pdf; <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/dialog/14630.pdf>. For an overview of German-language research on right-wing populism and gender, see Lang, 2018b, 147-161; Lang, 2018a; Fritzsche, 2018, 335-346 and FE.IN, 2019.

Related critical gender-sensitive research (Brown 2015; Duggan 2003, Fraser 2012) is therefore of great importance for any consideration of right-wing populism and gender. The economization and commodification of many areas of life, the erosion of the welfare state, the shift from solidarity to individual responsibility for oneself (the referral back to the family as agency of care, i.e. mostly to women), the associated global financial crises and the redistribution of social wealth, have an immense impact on the gender order (Lombardo et al. 2009), as the contributions of Schleusener and Sauer emphasize.

In particular, the gendered (or sexual) division of labor is gaining new importance – locally within families, and globally in the form of global care chains through which the care work of women in wealthier countries (who are integrated into the labor market) is ‘outsourced’ to women from mostly poorer regions. Meanwhile, the unequal division of labor between men and women at home remains largely untouched (Ehrenreich/Hochschild 2003). So far, approaches critical of neoliberalism with a gender focus (Dörre et al. 2006; Beier et al. 2018; Pühl/Sauer 2018) have hardly been combined with or applied to the right-wing populist complex (with the exception of Sauer). Conversely, existing studies of the right-wing populist complex that emphasize economic aspects mostly operate without a gender perspective (Schwander/Manow 2017; Rodrik 2018). We think that a gender perspective will shift the focus to one of the central fields of mobilization for the right and thus allow us to analyze the different effects that precarization has on male and female employment, on the gendered division of labor in families and on care work (Wichterich 2000).

Instead of addressing economic or political structures to explain current wrongs, right-wing populists claim that injustices and inequalities result from the success of liberal accomplishments that allegedly led to the rise of an undeserving elite whilst de-privileging the thus-perceived more deserving members of the White middle and lower classes, as the contributions by Spierings, Eszter Kováts, and Simon Strick show. Right-wing populists use this strategy to blame the achievements of emancipatory movements such as feminism or gay liberation for their followers’ feeling of social insecurity.

Finally, a central dimension for the analysis of how the right-wing populist complex works is the examination of affects and emotions (Ahmed 2004; Wodak 2015; Rico/Guinjoan 2017). The fields of gender, family, and sexual politics are heavily loaded with emotions – fears, passions, impulses to protect – which right-wing populist actors trigger and transfer into affective patterns: in the ‘crusades’ against homosexual educators and the adoption of children by gay couples (see the contribution by Wielowiejski), for instance, the need to contain sexuality in the safe space of the heteronormative family is particularly evident. Likewise, early sex education is attacked with the same arguments, as Möser and Schmincke explain for the French and German campaigns, such as *Manif pour tous* or *Demo für alle*,

respectively. As Sauer's contribution shows, emotional patterns beyond sexuality lead to new forms of 'affective citizenship.' Patterns such as 'concern' – think of the many 'concerned citizens' (besorgte Bürger, in German) in right-wing populist propaganda – or anger, counting as male virtues that are cultivated as legitimate 'political feelings' in right-wing populism. Kovát's contribution illustrates how such patterns work in the Hungarian context, where feelings of hatred towards allegedly dangerous foreigners and feminists are kindled and supported by the government.

Right-wing populists often manage to mobilize particular features of shared affects. The anthropologist Arlie Hochschild has recently described the attractiveness of Trumpism for women at Trump's election rallies as the chance for 'feeling politically together' (Hochschild 2016). In his contribution, Strick examines the workings of masculinist 'affective communities' on the Internet. These observations seemingly feed Chantal Mouffe's claim, made at the turn of the millennium, of the right dominating the affective realm at the time, since the left did not seem to have alternative imaginaries to offer (Mouffe 2000). Fifteen to twenty years later there are indicators of a change. By uniting precarious and diverse bodies in the streets, new feminist movements such as the 'Black Protest' in Poland, NiUnaMenos in Argentina, the international Women's Strike of March 8, or the Women's Marches in the U.S. seemingly provide a powerful emotional counterforce to the right-wing populist trend (Butler 2016; Roth 2020a). By evoking shared feelings of 'embodied intersectionality,' these movements promote and perform an inclusive form of solidarity as opposed to the exclusive notion that is grounded in the imaginary of the national supremacy predominating the right-wing populist complex (see the contributions by Graff and Roth).

Racialized Sexual Politics – Old and New Modernities

Right-wing 'obsession with gender' is most closely linked to a promotion of the 'ethno-sexist' (Dietze 2016) exclusion of racialized Others who are constructed as dangerous to the reproduction of the White national body. The narrative of migrants as a sexual threat, as was brought forward by the 'cultural panic' surrounding the harassments at New Year's Eve 2015/16 in Cologne, Germany, and through Trump's dictum of the 'Mexican rapist intruder,' provides striking examples. Another narrative constructs the fear of 'autochthonous' citizens being 'outnumbered' by the fertility of non-autochthonous 'invaders,' through which right-wing actors launch a selective pro-natalism (Schultz 2015) targeting particularly White women. Feminists, especially activists in pro-choice campaigns, are regarded as enemies in this respect. Recent transnational efforts to abolish or limit reproductive rights are closely related to this narrative (Gökarıksel et al. 2019), as Graff's contribution on the struggle of the feminist 'Black Protest' in Poland shows. Beyond the obvious

control of women's bodies, the cut into reproductive rights is aimed particularly at demographic policies (Schultz 2015; Fixmer-Oraiz 2019) in order to promote a 'New Maternalism' (Mezey/Pillard 2011), as Dietze argues in her contribution.

In consequence, right-wing populists question, oppose, and ambitiously fight feminists, non-traditional ways of life, and gender studies, perceiving them as obstacles to demographic goals. They represent emancipatory projects as a version of an 'old modernity' that terrorizes the 'people' with their sexualized ideas and models of the 'normalcy' of homosexuality and the alleged existence of more than two genders. Conversely, almost all formations of the right-wing populist complex claim to stand for a 'new' and 'other' modernity. Accordingly, in their contribution, Ajanović, Mayer and Sauer speak of a 'limited modernity' and Spierings of neo-traditionalization. This modern window dressing re-arranges traditional 'values' in a new narrative. Elaborating on Bauman's concept of 'Retrotopia' (Bauman 2017), for such visions of the future based on an idealized past, Schleusener coins the notion 'retrotopian desire' in his contribution. Related right-wing populist or conservative new/old brands of politics encase traditional forms of social life such as the church, the homeland (Heimat, in German), the 'people,' and the heteronormative family with an aura of a counterrevolution aiming at reoccupying lost territory. As a consequence, they fight an elite perceived as sexually licentious, unprincipled (secular), cosmopolitan (without homeland) and narcissistic-individualistic (singles, promoters of homosexuality). Right-wing populist logics are built on the construction of an inner enemy (the 'corrupt' elite, feminists, LGBTQI activists, political correctness etc.) and an outer enemy (immigrants as competitors for jobs and welfare and as threat to the national culture and sexual liberty of White women, 'gender ideology' as transnational menace to families, children, and the reproduction of the nation). These peculiarities stage gender as a central arena for polarizations, and thus for the working of right-wing populism in general.

Simultaneously, but not contradictorily, a kind of 'strategic progressivism' in sexual matters can be observed in right-wing populism in Europe and the United States. This pattern is expressed in the form of a 'sexual nationalism' (Mep-schen/Duyvendak 2012) or 'sexual exceptionalism' (Bracke 2011; Puar 2011; Dietze 2019), which projects sexism onto racialized Others constructed as intruders and sexual threats to the nation and the national culture. Following this pattern, right-wing populists can claim to defend the sexual freedom of women (and sometimes of gays and LGBT persons) against the sexism and homophobia of Others. In Germany, gay activists within the AfD defend (non-queer) homosexuality as a stronghold against gender-ambivalence, due to the assumed implied preference for one clear-cut gender (see Wielowiejski's contribution). Following this pattern, women from the Global North need to be protected from sexual harassment by racialized or ethnicized men – in the European context that means mostly young Muslim migrants. Western women can thereby draw an 'occidental dividend' (Di-

etze 2010: 100) based on the supposed superiority of occidental sexual and gender regimes in contrast to backwards ‘oriental’ gender regimes. Thereby they can simultaneously be presented as already ‘fully emancipated’ and as having achieved sexual self-determination. Equality politics and gender mainstreaming thus appear as not only unnecessary but also as harmful, because they undermine the self-confidence and agency of ‘autochthonous’ women and condemn them to an eternal victim position. The underlying contradictions – such as pro traditional family and for the defense of the sexual liberty of women and gays – a phenomenon Gutsche (2018) calls “pro women, against feminists,” are foundational for the gendered logics of right-wing populists and represent “calculated ambivalences” aimed to reach different fractions of a possible electorate (Reisigl 2020).

Gender as Meta-Language for Political Maneuvering

Right-wing populists not only raise questions of gender because they touch deep inner beliefs about what is considered appropriate by considerable parts of the population who feel overrun by ‘progressively contaminated’ public discourse, but also because it is a tool with which alliances can be forged. A study by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation on European anti-gender mobilization in 2015 is aptly titled *Gender as Symbolic Glue* (Kováts/Pöim 2015). In France, a campaign against gender-sensitive sex education and adoption rights for homosexuals united conservative Catholics, right-wing populists, and supporters of a private school system. There was a large turn-out by these groups to protests, and the campaign was able to recruit voters in favor of the Front National for the next election. Gender could be instrumentalized as a tool of coalition building, not only on national grounds but in international realms as well: Brazil’s newly elected President Jair Bolsonaro bonded with US President Donald Trump during his inaugural visit in March 2019 over being united in their ‘fight against gender ideology’ and ‘political correctness’ (Wempel 2018). In Hungary, gender mainstreaming introduced by the EU was perceived as ‘Western imperialism’ aimed at destroying the cultural identity of a small country. In a similar vein, Pope Francis described ‘gender ideology’ as “ideological colonization” used by international institutions to push pressure on poorer countries by forcing their dangerous concepts on them, thus uniting a broad spectrum of actors ranging from conservative Catholics to Evangelicals, Muslims, and orthodox Jews who consider themselves to be victims of this ‘ideology’ (Case 2019). After several priests in Poland had been accused of molesting children over a long period of time – incidents which the clerical authorities had known about but decided not to persecute –, the Catholic Church chose to decry the harmfulness of the gender category in December 2013 with a pastoral letter against the “gender ideology” instead of responding to the allegations against their priests.

Each of these examples shows that gender issues are suitable to fuel the struggle over 'cultural hegemony' in a Gramscian sense. Following Gramsci, launching certain ideas can bring about a slight shift in public discourse (*senso commune*), which is structurally capable of leading to a change in the entire perception of 'reality'. The French right-wing intellectual Alain de Benoist took up this concept in order to develop strategies to push the *senso commune* more into the political camp of the right-wingers. In order to set this in motion, following Benoist, so-called meta-politics is needed, i.e. the political propaganda should not be oriented towards parties, elections, and parliaments, but should work with everyday topics that are strongly interconnected with feelings. In this context, art forms like music, such as right-wing rock and folk festivals, are strategic fields through which cultural hegemony can be promoted meta-politically. The right-wing extremist campaign '1% for Germany' is based on the conviction that if small minorities can be seduced and convinced by right-wing extremist ideas, the concept can be transferred to society as a whole and thereby create cultural hegemony via meta-politics.

All these political maneuverings considered, one question is still in need of explanation: Why of all things is the category 'gender' so useful for meta-politics? The editors of this volume agree with Sauer's analysis (2017) that gender relations, or more precisely the relation of two sexes as an imagined binary, are still regarded as immutable natural facts – regardless of the emancipation movements of recent decades. Populists do not tire of invoking the allegedly inescapable 'biological' difference of the sexes, which are understood as antagonistic and complementary. This assertion naturalizes heteronormative couplings and reifies the related hierarchy between men and women. Assuming two (and only two) sexes as binary and hierarchically arranged is the essential category of order *per se*. The right-wing struggle against gender is thus always also a struggle against the dissolution of 'natural' orders, indeed a challenge of order in general (see the contribution of Spierings on 'order society'). In this respect, the sexes cannot be socially constructed in any case, because they would then be malleable and would thereby not only lose their function to describe and guarantee a hierarchical order, but would also question male domination, which is still one of the major motivations for problematizing 'gender' in the first place.

By bringing different actors and fields of investigation together, this collected volume seeks to combine case studies and theoretical considerations on a right-wing populist complex and gender with an intersectional perspective that integrates 'race'/ethnicity/religion, class/neoliberalism/milieu, and affect/emotion/feelings into its analysis, thereby identifying sexual politics as one of the main arenas of

contention. Moreover, the collection of contributions seeks to demonstrate that the category of gender is not only crucial not just for analyzing the shift to the right, analyzing its programmatic contents and objectives, and understanding its attractiveness. Employing gender in right-wing rhetoric can also mean using the category as a tool for coalition building, a right-wing critique of globalization and for ethnonationalism, and as a vehicle for gaining cultural hegemony. Taken together, all these elements are constitutive for the success and impact of the right-wing populist complex in different and context-related forms and they cannot be understood without implementing a systematic gender lens.

As we have seen, right-wing populist actors have moved the struggle over hegemony center stage, and gender serves them as a meta-language, as an "affective bridge" (Dietze 2019) and as a central arena for that matter. Judith Butler recently described the right-wing obsession with gender as a replacement, condensation and abbreviation of cultural anxiety (Butler 2020). However, this struggle is far from being decided. Because of the strong entanglements of the right-wing populist complex with other forces of inequality and injustice and its spectral presence in so many areas, the disruption of these articulations requires many different paths. The numerous feminist protests emerging recently – that are the focus of the last part of this volume (see chapters of Roth and Graff) – have indicated that the fight concerning the contestations and withdrawals of rights takes place on the streets. These movements demonstrate that it continues to be worthwhile to intervene in public discourse at the discursive level in order to ward off the right-wing grasp for cultural hegemony, albeit without zeal and anger but with patience and emphasis. The current protests also show that the manipulations via exclusionary affects such as fear and wrath can be countered with inclusive affects like solidarity and empathy. The right-wing populist offer part of 'the people-as-one' can be denied on grounds of a preference for a 'people-as-multiple' (Gunnarsson-Payne 2019: 7) and nonconformist notions of diversity. In this current state of affairs, to quote Toni Morrison, who passed away while these last lines were in the making, "All necks are on the line." (Morrison 1989).

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Authoritarian Right-Wing Populism as Masculinist Identity Politics. The Role of Affects

Birgit Sauer

1. Introduction

Since the turn of the century, Europe, but also other regions in the world, have been confronted with the growth and emergence of right-wing populist, nationalist, and authoritarian parties and organizations. In Hungary and Poland, nationalist right-wing parties in government have started to transform their countries into so-called ‘illiberal democracies.’ The Austrian Freedom Party FPÖ (Freiheitliche Partei Österreich) pushed its partner in the government coalition, the conservative Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP), towards racist anti-immigration policies, towards further dismantling the Austrian welfare state and social partnership, attacking the state radio and TV stations as well as feminist civil society organizations. The French Front National (now Rassemblement National) has developed into a major force in France’s political landscape as have the Sweden Democrats. For a long time, Germany seemed to be immune to right-wing political strategies; however, the recent electoral successes of the “Alternative for Germany” (AfD, Alternative für Deutschland) proved that this is no longer the case. Moreover, right-wing social movements like the German PEGIDA (Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes, Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident) and the Identitarian movements across Europe challenge liberal democracies.

In this article, I want to argue that recent right-wing populist mobilization is a gendered movement, which fosters masculinist identity politics at the intersection of gender, class, religion, ethnicity, and sexuality. Antagonistic strategies of the nationalist, authoritarian, and populist right have to be located in simultaneous transformations of capitalist market societies, of European gender regimes, especially in strong male bread-winner-oriented countries and, thus, ongoing social struggles over class, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity. Or, in other words: intersecting structures of difference and domination, which have shaped welfare states since their emergence in the 19th century, have been put into question by neoliberal transformations over the last 30 years and are politicized by right-wing actors.

Already at first glance the importance of gender relations seems to be indicated by the right-wingers' obsession with gender, i.e. their mobilization against the concept of gender for the last ten years, their construction of an endangered masculinity, and their framing of a 'crisis of masculinity.' The so-called manifesto by the Norwegian nativist white-supremacist mass murderer Anders Breivik was based on such sexist assumptions. His fear of a "feminisation of European culture" (Breivik 2011: 36) has become an important dimension of today's radical right-wing populist discourse.

This alleged endangerment of masculinity points to another dimension of masculinist identity politics – the use of affects in right-wing populist political mobilization – be it *fear* of 'the Other,' i.e. migrants, feminists or gender equality politicians, be it *anger* towards the elite, *love* of one's country, the 'Heimat,' as well as new feelings of belonging to a 'we,' of solidarity within this group. Masculinity and affect meet in debates about *thymos* by Marc Jongen (2016), one of the *AfD*'s intellectuals.¹ This affective politicization by the radical right is also rooted in other fundamental social and political transformations of the last 30 years, namely the mobilization of affect for neoliberal economic instrumentalization and subjectivization. Thus, the overall aim of my article is to theorize the populist radical right with a gender and affect perspective.

In the following, I will *first* discuss right-wing populism as a male phenomenon in order to demonstrate the importance of a gendered focus on its causes. *Second*, I will explain the success of right-wing populism with reference to changing gender relations and gender regimes. I will argue that right-wing populist mobilization is a project of masculinist identity politics. In a *third* step, I will highlight the affective entanglements of right-wing populist masculinist identity politics, to *finally* reflect on the right-wing gendered project as a new affective anti-democratic political hegemony.

2. Right-Wing Populist Parties as "Männerparteien": Description of the Gendered Phenomenon

While right-wing groups and parties were re-established in several European countries right after the Second World War, the emergence and growth of the 'new' right is a relatively recent phenomenon of the last two decades (Birsl 2011: 11; Müller

1 In Platon's work 'thymos' denotes one of the three basic human motivations, the passionate and angry affect. The German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk (2006) applied the meaning of 'thymos' to the contemporary situation, and his academic student Marc Jongen introduced the concept into right-wing discourse.

2016: 18). Hans-Jürgen Bieling (2017: 557) identifies three waves of right-wing parties and movements since the 1970s. The third wave is characterized by a sort of 'modernization' of 'old' right-wing parties into 'new' *populist* parties which at the same time became more nationalist, nativist, and authoritarian. Cas Mudde (2004: 543) considers populism to be a "thin-centred ideology," a communicative strategy of appealing to and creating *first* a 'we,' 'the' people, versus 'them,' the elite or the establishment. Other ideologies can be attached to this thin ideology – such as nationalism, nativism, and racism on the right. Right-wing populist parties and movements are characterized by a *second* antagonism, despite their different national and historic backgrounds – the opposition of the 'we' to the 'Others,' be it immigrants, asylum seekers, Muslims, LGBTIQ-people, or feminists. These 'Others' are supposedly posing a threat to the assumed autochthonous people, the 'we.' The 'we,' emerging in these right-wing antagonisms, is a homogeneous, morally pure, and ethnicized people. Mudde (ibid.) eventually mentions a *third* feature of right-wing populism, namely an authoritarian element. Hence, Stuart Hall's (1985) term "authoritarian populism," coined for the Thatcher government in the UK, also fits for recent radical right-wing populist strategies across Europe.

Notwithstanding national differences across Europe, gender and sexuality have been important pillars of radical right-wing ideologies for a long time – such as a gender binary which is perceived as natural, or a traditional gendered division of labor in the heterosexual model of the male bread-winner and the woman as mother (Sauer et al. 2016: 113; Mayer/Sori/Sauer 2016). Moreover, hegemonic masculinity (Connell/Messerschmidt 2005) in the right-wing narrative and imaginary is constructed as heroic masculinity, able to protect the weak and vulnerable woman, who is regarded as important for the reproduction of heterosexual families, the nation, and the state (Rommelspacher 2011: 54). Thus, the extreme right's ideology has always been based on sexist assumptions. However, heroic masculinity is not only attractive for men but also for women.

While the role of gender and sexuality in the new populist right has only recently received some scholarly attention (Spierings/Zaslove 2015; special volume of *West European Politics*, Vol. 40/4, 2017), the most common gendered assumption is that right-wing populist parties are "men's parties," *Männerparteien*, as Cas Mud (2007, chapter 4) called them, referring to the German expression. The label *Männerpartei* includes five contested changing and paradoxical dimensions. *First*, right-wing parties are "drawing especially from the support of male voters" (Erzeel/Rashkova 2017: 813). Nevertheless, this radical right gender gap in voting varies in different national contexts (Spierings/Zaslove 2017: 839; Hartevelde et al. 2015). Nonna Mayer's (2013) research shows that Marine Le Pen appeals much more to women than her father Jean-Marie Le Pen did and that hence, the gender gap in voting decreased in the latest French elections. I suggest that the gender gap in voting cannot be fully explained by gender alone, but that dimensions of class, ed-

ucation, race, and ethnicity also need to be taken into account. In most European countries, the intersection of education, social status or class, and gender explains the growth of the radical right, as mainly young, poorly educated, or unemployed men vote for the populist right (ibid.: 162). In the last US presidential elections, 52 percent of white women drew their vote for Trump, while he only received 4 percent of the female African-American votes (Bump 2018). Hence, in the US, race and gender intersect in explanations of the rise of right-wing populism.

Second, gender differences in political opinions and motivations make right-wing parties “*Männerparteien*” and lead to the gender gap in voting: men, for instance, “have stronger populist (i.e. antagonistic, B.S.) attitudes than women” (Spierings/Zaslove 2017: 840). This means that the framing of a ‘we’ against ‘Others’ regarding the issue of migration appeals more to men than to women. Also, men seem to be more attracted to masculinist-heroic leadership than women (Birl 2011: 12; Schellenberg 2012: 2).

The *third* characteristic of maleness refers to parliamentary representatives of right-wing parties. Traditionally, these parties attract a male constituency and this translates into a large proportion of male representatives in parliament, not least due to the rejection of quota regulations. However, this ‘male’ picture of parliament gets blurred in different contexts: in the last European Parliament, for instance, the ‘Europe of Nations and Freedom’ (ENF) group, which includes the Austrian FPÖ, the Belgian *Vlaams Belang*, the French *Front National*, the Italian *Lega Nord*, and the Dutch *Partij for the Vrijheid*,² counted on 34 percent women representatives, while overall the EP had 36 percent women representatives (Erzeel/Rashkova 2017: 814).

Fourth: traditionally, right-wing parties were headed by “male charismatic leaders” (ibid.: 813) – as for instance Jörg Haider in Austria or Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands. However, today, women also take over leadership positions in these parties. These women do not fit the right-wing image of motherhood – such as Marine Le Pen, Pia Kjærsgaard from the *Danish People’s Party*, Siv Jensen from *Norway’s Progress Party* or Alice Weidel, an openly lesbian mother, from the *AfD* (Meret 2015; Meret/Siim/Pingaud 2016; Blee/McGee Deutsch 2012; Bitzan 2000). This ‘feminization’ strategy or strategy of “de-demonization” (Mayer 2013: 161) allows right-wing parties to counter or relativize the image of being men’s parties and to attract female voters. Nevertheless, these female leaders struggle with a masculinist party structure and thus have to perform their own form of political masculinity (for a definition of political masculinity see Starck/Sauer 2014).

Fifth, substantive representation of women, i.e. acting *for* women and fighting *for* women’s policies in parliament, is lower in right-wing parties than in others parties. Especially, right-wingers in parliament do not support women’s issues

2 www.enfgroup-ep.eu

such as abortion, reproductive rights, quota regulations, or equal opportunity policies. Nevertheless, right-wing parties modernized their male-oriented programs and their conservative gender ideology in order to “remain electorally successful” (Erzeel/Rashkova 2017: 816). Amesberger and Halbmayr (2002: 308), for instance, addressed the “modernized traditional gender images” of the Austrian FPÖ.

These five features demonstrate the importance of a gendered perspective on the radical populist right. The genderedness of the radical populist right is also mirrored in the recent development of its new “gender ideology” (Mudde 2007: 92), which is supposed to enrich the populists’ “thin-centred ideology.” This new ‘gender ideology’ of the right refers explicitly to the scientific and political concept of gender in order to fight what they call “genderism” – be it gender studies, gender mainstreaming, gender equality policies and the recognition of sexual diversity (Kuhar/Paternotte 2017; Hark/Villa 2015; for Austria Mayer/Sauer 2017). This anti-gender discourse matches the antagonistic politics of the authoritarian right across Europe. For instance, anti-gender framing modulates resentments against the EU by presenting gender mainstreaming as imposed ‘from above,’ from Brussels. The anti-gender discourse also frames gender equality and gender studies as projects concocted by a cosmopolitan feminist establishment or a feminist “metropolitan elite” (Cain 2016), who only pursue their own interests, while neglecting the interests of the ‘women in the streets.’ Finally, the recognition of sexual diversity is framed as a threat for children, especially for boys who are presented as endangered of being harassed by homosexual teachers (Mayer/Sauer 2017; Schmincke 2015).

This ‘anti-genderist’ mobilization, however, seems to be ambivalent when “it comes to the rights of Muslim women” (de Lange/Mügge 2015: 65): right-wing populist parties condemn the alleged backwardness, the pre-modern, patriarchal, and misogynist barbarism and the violence of migrant, especially of Muslim, men. The aim is to stigmatize Muslim ‘Others’ as incompatible with the presumed gender equality of Western societies. This “femonationalist” argument, as Sara Farris (2017) calls it, or these ethno-sexist struggles (Dietze 2016) have been activated especially after the sexual assaults in Cologne on New Year’s Eve 2015.

Thus, the so-called ‘anti-genderism’ became an element of a politics of *Othering*, referring to gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, and migration. Radical right-wing parties “couch their anti-immigrant proposals in gendered terms” (Morgan 2017: 888). But it would be too easy to consider gender as being merely instrumentalized by the radical right for their anti-migrant policies. Right-wingers’ focus on gender points to a broader political picture: the radical right actively engages in ongoing gender struggles, in transformations of gender relations, in order to transform liberal democracies and to push towards a new hegemonic project.

3. Gendered Explanations of the Rise of the Radical Populist Right

The growth of the radical right is perceived as a breakdown of trust in the liberal democratic order, and especially in the political elites that represent this order. But why this decline of trust? Why the decline of a belief in liberal-democratic institutions and politicians? Why the ‘crisis of representation? According to Mudde (2004), a “populist *Zeitgeist*” emerged in the 1980s, which has since characterized most parties in Western liberal democracies that moved towards post-democratic (Crouch 2004) or – as Chantal Mouffe (2000) writes – post-political conditions. The move to the center of the catch-all-parties and their search for consensus, Mouffe claims, opened a window of opportunity for the radical populist right to politicize new antagonisms.

Scholars following the theory of materialism tend to trace back the success of today’s right-wing populist extremism to the fundamental economic and social transformations since the 1990s, which are widely labelled as neoliberal restructuring and the financialization of capitalism. These transformations have strengthened the interests of capital at the expense of the working class and parts of the middle class (Jessop 2016: 134). The deregulation of labor, austerity policies, the dismantling of public provisions, and cuts in social welfare resulted in rising unemployment, the precarization of labor, social insecurity and uncertainty, in an unequal distribution of wealth that is visible in growing poverty and in the emergence of the super-rich (Piketty 2014). At the same time, neoliberal subjectivization fostered individualization, responsabilization and competitiveness as well as the decline of solidarity and care for others as a social value. These transformations eroded the liberal democratic compromise – the consensus of welfare, equality, and regulated political participation – of the 1970s.

Hence, right-wing populist parties and organizations can be seen, in the words of Klaus Dörre (2016: 2), as “movements against the impositions and compulsion of the capitalist market,” movements against the disappointment over cuts in welfare and the fear of losing wealth.³ Thus, the emergence of the radical populist right is understood as a class-specific reaction, a movement against the deprivation of neoliberal economic globalization, job loss and cuts in social welfare. Philip Manow (2018) developed the concept of a “political economy of populism.” He claims that right-wing populism emerges and grows in countries with high immigration levels and with open and generous welfare states that include migrants and refugees into their welfare schemes (*ibid.*: 65ff.).

However, the success of right-wing populism is not only a result of the precarization of labor and the fear of losing economic and social security, i.e. it is not

3 Translation by the author.

only a working-class issue, not least due to the fact that parts of the middle-class are also afraid of losing wealth, recognition, power, and prestige (Koppetsch 2017). Therefore, right-wing populism is also a gendered issue, a movement against the transformation of gender regimes, fueled by affective politics.

The emergence and growth of a new kind of right-wing populism in the last two decades is rooted in fundamental neoliberal transformations of gender regimes, especially in Western bread-winner-oriented societies. Until the late 1970s, the welfare consensus and gender regimes in most European countries had been based on the inequality between men and women, on the division between (male) paid labor and (female) unpaid care work, which made women dependent on a male bread-winner. The inclusion of women into higher education, the expansion of the so-called Keynesian welfare state, and the struggle of women's movements since the late 1960s have led to more gender equality in European societies, as women successively entered the labor market. Since the late 1980s, neoliberal restructuring has resulted – with different paces in different European countries – in an acceleration of the inclusion of women into labor markets, in the intensified commodification of female labor, and thus in an ambivalent “neoliberal gender equality,” in the words of Christa Wichterich (2007).⁴ Hence, neoliberal arrangements allowed for a further – albeit ambivalent – emancipation of women, especially of well-educated women who became the target of affirmative action policies.

At the same time, male labor became more precarious and the ‘family income’ declined as a consequence of neoliberal restructuring. Overall, the systematic erosion of wealth among the working- and middle-class population through labor deregulation and cuts in welfare from the 1990s was accompanied by the erosion of hierarchical gender regimes and of male dominance in the private sphere as well as in the public sphere, i.e. of wage labor, politics, and the state (Wimbauer/Motakef/Teschlade 2015). These developments created a considerable challenge to masculine hegemony and fostered the discourse about “failed patriarchs,” i.e. men who are supposed to take over dominant or bread-winner-positions but at the same time are confronted with their declining significance on the labor market (Radhakrishnan/Solari 2015). Men are confronted with a loss of “hegemony and power of interpretation” (Koppetsch 2017).⁵

Against this background, the radical right claims to compensate these losses. In this vein, Björn Höcke (AfD) mobilized fear of a loss of forceful masculinity at the 2015 party congress: “We have to rediscover our masculinity. Only if we rediscover our masculinity we will be manful. And only if we are manful we will be able

4 Translation by the author.

5 Translation by the author.

to become fortified; and we have to be able to become fortified, dear friends!"⁶ The populist right frames the marginalization of working- and middle-class men as a 'crisis of masculinity' and blames this crisis on female labor market integration, gender equality and, of course, migration policies. Instead of arguing for a new distribution of labor and time between men and women, the populist right channels the feelings caused by the deprived class status of "subordinated men" (Connell/Messerschmidt 2005) into *hatred* against well-educated women and against migrants. Hence, the right-wing anti-gender discourse and the evocation of a 'crisis of masculinity' is another facet of the re-signification process of neoliberal social inequality, strategically confounding causes and consequences by interpellating "wounded white men" (Brown 2010).

In this discourse of drawing boundaries, of exclusion and 'Othering,' right-wing populism contributes to the self-affirmation of masculinity by offering points of reference for the re-establishment of traditional gender constellations and thus for the abolishment of gender equality policies. The right-wing interpellation of the 'little man in the streets' is part of a masculinist identity politics, which includes the promise that a charismatic leader might increase the self-confidence of subordinated masculinities. However, masculinist identity politics can also attract women: those who are exhausted by the double burden of neoliberal emancipation and who long for a 'male hero or savior,' or those who find new forms of agency in masculinist gender constellations. Moreover, the masculinist setting also includes subordinated women who are afraid of losing 'secure' gender relations in their daily lives.

This explicit focus on gender relations helps to understand that the right-wing populist mobilization of a (traditional) masculinist identity is part of a discourse against the commodification of everyday life and of securing the everyday life – however, at the expense of gender equality. In the following I want to illustrate the role of affect in this masculinist identity politics.

4. "Politics of Fear." Affective Mobilization of the Nationalist Populist Right

Emotions and affects have been recognized as important elements of right-wing populist mobilization in the past years. Betz (2002) perceives populist rhetoric as "designed to tap feelings of *ressentiment* and exploit them politically" (ibid.: 198). Ruth Wodak (2015) coined the term "politics of fear," which underpins right-wing populist strategies.

6 Speech at the party convention of the AfD, November 2015 at Erfurt, (translation B.S.), www.youtube.com/watch?v=yBvyOMR3KBE, 30.11.2016.

However, from a political science perspective, the link between “populism and emotions remains undertheorized” (Rico/Guinjoan/Anduiza 2017: 3). Recent political science research under the paradigm of rational choice includes emotions as variables in its analysis of right-wing populism (Vasilopoulou/Wagner 2017: 384). This research aims to explain the influence of emotions on citizens’ political preferences, political judgement, and voting behavior. Thus, emotions are conceptualized as individual experiences or preferences, as variables that shape political behavior: such studies show that “anger boosts political participation” and protest (Rico/Guinjoan/Anduiza 2016: 6; also Wagner 2013: 684), while fear leads to “increased vigilance” and sadness supports “compassionate politics” (Rico/Guinjoan/Anduiza 2016: 7). Hence, they conclude that the radical right needs to mobilize and foster anxiety, fear, and insecurity and has to transform these feelings into anger against somebody who can be made accountable.

While mainstream political parties have been neglecting the issue of rising social inequality as well as “feelings of dispossession” (Müller 2016: 21), right-wing parties actively caught up with the fears of deprivation and disempowerment: “Right-wing populism gains support where fear of economic and social decline meets anger over social inequality.” (Saxer 2017: 16)

While I agree with some of these findings, I think that in order to fully understand the role of affects in recent transformations of democracy we need a critical, social-theoretical approach, which perceives affects not only as a political variable or as an individual feature but as a social “structure of feeling” (Williams 1977), as a power structure between people and thus as a mode of governing people.⁷ In this perspective, bodily affects are always part of discursive or representational constellations. Therefore, settings of power and domination as well as processes of subjectivization rest not only on material conditions, on symbolic and discursive identifications but also on affective and bodily practices.

An affect perspective highlights that in the last 30 years, affects have moved to the center of new neoliberal forms of governance. In our recent work, Otto Penz and I labelled these new technologies of governing as “neoliberal affective governmentality” in a Foucauldian sense (Sauer/Penz 2017). Affective governmentality aims at affective subjectivization in a double sense – of *creating* subjects as affective and cognitive rational beings but also of *dominating* citizens in neoliberal conditions. The neoliberal ‘will to feel’ and the tradition of affective governmentality mobilize affects’ aim towards engaging the ‘whole person,’ her cognitive and affective competencies in the work place but also in the public and private spheres. Neoliberalism has mobilized the affects of people to instrumentalize them for capitalist production, while at the same time devaluating care and solidarity. Neoliberalism

7 I prefer the concept of affect over the concept of emotion as affect points to the interconnectivity of body, mind, and cognition.

mobilized affects in the sphere of wage labor for the transformation into service economies and new forms of exploiting of the workforce by transgressing boundaries between work and private lives.

This led to what Papadopoulos and Tsianos (2006) labelled “embodied capitalism.” The *homo oeconomicus* shall be accompanied by the *homo affectus* (Sauer/Penz 2017). In addition, governments use affective means to govern citizens. The call for creativity and permanent availability at the work place, activation paradigms of social policies and community engagement are new affective strategies to interpellate ‘active and affective citizens’ in times of rising unemployment, cuts in welfare provisions, and a less protective and redistributive state. These affective citizens, however, have only limited opportunities to political participation. New forms of “affective citizenship” have replaced citizenship as rights (Fortier 2010). Another dimension of neoliberal affective governmentality are politics of responsabilization, of insecurity and securitization. The “entrepreneurial self” needs to take risks, to be competitive and successful. Failure produces shame.

Neoliberal affective governmentality thus produces insecurity and fear, while unleashing passions against those deemed unsuccessful and in need. In right-wing discourse, especially men but also women are given the right to be furious and passionate, they are freed from caring about others (as they have always been), from feelings of solidarity; and men are encouraged to modulate fear into anger and direct this anger towards ‘Others.’ Thus, blaming the elite, which is presented as ignoring people’s needs and feelings, or blaming refugees and feminists for being responsible for their losses of wealth and security, i.e. turning fear into anger against these groups, are right-wing affective strategies to mobilize anger, to compensate for the loss of men’s position of supremacy and to give agency back to lost voters (Hochschild 2016; Cramer 2016). Blaming the elite can be seen as relief, as a way of de-responsibilizing men and re-sovereignizing masculinity by re-establishing dominance through anger and aggression. The transformation of anxiety and fear, which originate in neoliberal affective demands at the workplace, for instance, towards anger against ‘Others’ is a way of reclaiming agency and control over one’s life, over men’s and women’s lives – which were sacrificed to neoliberal competition and risk-taking.

Moreover, a feminist perspective points to the intersection of affective structures of domination and gender structures. These intersecting structures of domination point to constellations which are engrained in capitalist-patriarchal structures and bourgeois society, such as relations of production, division of labor, the separation between public and private as well as between national and international. The emergence of the radical right can therefore be explained by affective masculinist identity politics and the right-wing canalization of affect, especially aggression, towards an exclusive form of belonging that Marc Jongen (2017), the AfD’s ideologist, fosters with his notion of *thymos*, of (male) aggressiveness. The fear of a

crisis of masculinity and the affective wish for a better future based on traditional gender roles, the heterosexual family and its promise of love, is constructed and politicized by right-wing populists. Affective masculinist identity politics promises to compensate the loss of traditional masculinist power positions and gender relations (Strick 2018).

At the same time, right-wing affective mobilization entails the promise of new forms of solidarity in times when ‘traditional’ forms of solidarity, for instance of the welfare state and the family, are eroding, an exclusive solidarity based on welfare chauvinism and nationalism, promising hope and empathy only within a group of ‘similar people.’ A case in point are the *Sweden Democrats*, who re-defined the notion of the “folkhem” in such an exclusive direction (Norocel 2013: 12) by creating a right-wing exclusive, affective atmosphere and “attunements” (Stewart 2011).

Hence, masculinist identity politics has been accompanied on the one hand by affective constructions of nationhood – of Austrianness, Germanness or Frenchness – whilst affectively excluding those constructed as ‘Others.’ On the other hand, right-wing populism includes an affective claim for recognition and citizenship. However, this “affective citizenship” (Fortier 2010) has to be related to ‘appropriate’ national and gendered feelings. Affective citizenship thus excludes and disrespects those who are marked as not belonging, those who should not belong to the national affective community and who should therefore be deprived of rights. Affective citizenship creates a specific form of affiliation to a community, an identity at the intersection of all genders who identify as natural.

Moreover, neoliberal citizenship is linked to processes of affective individualization, in which citizens are seen as customers, not endowed with rights but forced to develop an entrepreneurial spirit. Thus, the affective mobilization by the populist right includes the promise of affective agency in a time in which people have been deprived of agency and rights.

My overall argument is that it is not only right-wing populist strategies that draw on the triple register of cognition, body, and affect. The success of the radical right’s affective strategy rests on an affective governmentality which became a general mode of governing people in times of neoliberalism. While right-wing populist parties across Europe seem to have one single issue – the mobilization against migration –, they still try to capture the fears of insecurity in the relations between men and women, the shame of ‘failed patriarchs,’ in order to safeguard against commodification of labor and life, by restoring the inequality of gender relations. Moreover, neoliberal affective strategies of self-entrepreneurship, of competition and insecurity have created masculinist affective subjectivities – entitled to compensate for fear and shame by anger and irresponsibility for others. Hence, the affective strategy of the radical right is successful because affect mobilization has been part of neoliberal subjectivization for a long time.

In the following, I want to reflect why gender is so important for right-wing mobilization and what the affective perspective tells us about the struggle over cultural and political hegemony and the new hegemonic project of the radical right.

5. Gendered Struggles for Hegemony and the Role of Affects

A gender perspective reveals that the radical right's project pushes towards the fundamental transformation of liberal democracies and welfare states. Right-wing so-called 'anti-genderist' mobilization must be seen as a 'cultural war' which turns the critique of neoliberal global restructuring *against* emancipatory movements of the 1960s and 1970s and *against* the Keynesian welfare state with its aims of (albeit limited) social equality and democratization. In these cultural and political struggles, gender works as an "empty signifier" (Laclau 1996) which is able to combine populist right-wing visions of society and the state, – such as natural inequality, exclusion, and authoritarianism – in order to modulate new hegemonic constellations. Hence, the empty signifier 'gender' becomes a catalyst in the movement of a masculinist identity politics to restore traditional gender regimes but also to push forward an anti-democratic project.

Referring to gender constructs a specific notion of 'the people' in three discursive modes: as a binary concept, gender *first* builds the paradigm for dividing societies into two distinct groups and eventually legitimizes the fundamental inequality of people and thus of social hierarchies (Lewandowsky/Giebler/Wagner 2016: 252ff.; Birsl 2011: 17). *Second*, gender evokes a natural, homogeneous, and pure people (Diehl 2016: 17) and thus represents an ethnopluralist idea of a people and an aversion towards a mix of different ethnicities. This nationalist-populist politics rejects plurality and legitimizes securitization, walling off the nation and walling out migrants and refugees (Brown 2010).

Third, in the antagonistic gender frame, the people is constructed as weak and passive, without agency – a deceived victim of elites. This people needs to be saved from the seduction of corrupt political and intellectual elites – such as gender politicians or the media. The savior is, of course, a right-wing populist leader. Hence, the interpellation of the people in right-wing populist political communication is part of the quest for more political leadership and thus for more authoritarianism.

In the populist right's struggle, gender works as a discourse that fundamentally challenges social equality, non-discrimination, and democratic sovereignty by evoking the natural inequality of human beings and the nativist people in need of leadership. In this argument, democracy as sovereignty of the people seems impossible due to the inequality of people and due to the need of protection, hierarchy,

and leadership. The paternalistic and patriarchal image of the people results in an anti-democratic move.

Moreover, the transformation of gender relations and the right-wing mobilization of gender have been accompanied and spurred by a neoliberal mobilization and modulation of affects. Self-reliant people have to govern themselves; they have to be responsible for their own affects; they have to produce affects but at the same time moderate and manage their affects in order to be successful either on the job or in the private sphere. Affective citizenship is a masculinist notion of the sovereign subject.

Moreover, neoliberal affective governmentality has produced an excess of affects – especially of fear and insecurity. Right-wing antagonistic mobilization is able to draw on the modes of neoliberal affective governmentality. The political radical right is able to channel these affects in their gender ideology as the masculinist right to be aggressive without caring for others.

Against this background, I suggest to further engage in studying (right-wing) politics as an intersectional struggle over social relations – class, gender, sexuality, religion, and ethnicity, which have been embedded in Western liberal democracies and welfare states since the 19th century. Such an intersectional approach requires new coalitions in the struggle for democracy and democratization as well as against the radical populist right. It requires cooperation between social justice movements, such as the women's movements, migrant movements, leftist parties, and trade unions. These struggles are and have to be – in a Weberian sense – passionate struggles. However, we need more conceptual work to elaborate on the perspectives of affective emancipatory politics – of an affective democracy. In order to reclaim emancipatory ways of affective politics, it is not enough to mobilize passions and antagonisms “towards democratic designs” as Chantal Mouffe (2013) claims in “Politics and Passions.” Affects are not per se democratic, they are always modulating power relations and are, thus, a dimension of *ongoing* struggles for – and against – equality and solidarity.

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