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Gender, Populism and Anti-Immigration: Ethno-Sexist, Femonationalist and Femoglobal Alliances

Abstract

In current struggles over cultural hegemony, conservative and right-wing populist discourse is marked by an omni-presence of topics related to gender and sexuality. This article examines the ways in which diverse actors of what will be called the 'right-wing populist complex' use gender in order to catapult a variety of arguments into the public sphere with particular focus on actors in the Americas and Germany. Suggesting a first set of *Right-Wing Populist Patterns of Gendering*[1], the article pursues the question how seemingly emancipatory arguments function in right-wing discourse, especially in performing a modernisation paradigm, while simultaneously, and in often paradoxical ways, promoting a program of re-traditionalisation. Therefore, often, gender arguments—like the sexual freedom of 'autochtonous' women—are used to justify anti-immigration and racist politics. One's own society can thus be depicted as supposedly already fully emancipated in contrast to the alleged 'backward' social order of immigrants. Through this ethno-sexist twist, the article argues that gender provides right-wing populist discourse a useful tool for affectively bridging seemingly paradoxical arguments and transferring diverse social hierarchies shaped by late neoliberalism onto the gender hierarchy of a society. Since gender as a discursive element is foundational for right-wing discourse, an analytical, systematic and intersectional gender lens—or a critical gender theory—is crucial in right-wing populism research in order to grasp patterns of gendering and their entanglements with racialisation and racist structures.

Keywords: *right-wing populism and gender*; *anti-migration*; *ethno-sexism*; *antifeminism*; *sexual exceptionalism*; *reverse anti-colonialism*; *Donald Trump*; *Jair Bolsonaro*; *U.S.A.*; *Brazil*; *AfD*

1 See my suggestion for such patterns in Julia Roth: Can Feminism Trump Populism? Right-Wing Trends and Intersectional Contestations in the Americas, Trier 2021.

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When Brazilian president Jair Messias Bolsonaro paid his first visit to U.S. president Donald Trump in March 2019, he emphasised their common struggle as being one against "fake news", "political correctness", and "the gender ideology".[2] Both Trump and Bolsonaro had caused scandals when their sexist and racist attitudes were revealed during their candidacy, and both won the elections regardless of these scandals. Both have mobilised against immigrants or internal racialised groups and count on the support of predominantly White women supporters. Also, in European multi-party systems such as the German one, where right-wingers usually form part of the opposition, an increased focus on gender and antifeminism can be observed, often in relation to anti-immigration, racism, and Islamophobia. An election campaign poster of the 2016 election campaign by the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) read: "Our women remain free"[3] beneath a portrait of a woman wearing a Burqa. Another AfD 2016 election campaign poster provocatively claimed "New Germans? We prefer to make them ourselves"[4] above a photograph of a pregnant women's body, whose face is not shown. The phrase 'New Germans' (*neue Deutsche*) mocks the self-definition of migrant Germans who confront racist exclusions and insist on 'being German' and on belonging to German society. On 16 May 2018,[5] AfD chairwoman and opposition leader, Alice Weidel, in a speech during the 2018 budget debate at the lower house of parliament (the Bundestag) in Berlin, Germany warned against "state-sponsored knife men," and "headscarf girls" who would "not protect our wealth, our economic growth and above all our welfare state".[6] AfD spokeswoman Beatrix von Storch has launched a campaign against gender studies, which in Hungary have already been abolished under the Orbán administration. Abortion is on the agenda (again) and divides opinions and societies in many countries, such as Poland, the U.S., or Argentina.

2 Michelle Goldberg: The Heartbreak of the 2019 Women's March, in: The New York Times online edition, 18 January 2019, at: https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/18/opinion/womens-march-antisemitism.html (accessed on 19 March 2019).

3 In the original: "Unsere Frauen bleiben frei". Translated by the author.

4 In the original: "Neue Deutsche? Machen wir selber". Translated by the author.

5 Reuters: AfD-Fraktionschefin löst mit ausländerfeindlicher Rede Tumulte aus, in: Reuters online, 16 May 2018, at: https://de.reuters.com/article/deutschland-bundestag-afd-id-DEKCN1IH0QU (accessed on 30 March 2020).

6 In the original: "alimentierten Messermännern", "Kopftuchmädchen", "unseren Wohlstand, das Wirtschaftswachstum und vor allem den Sozialstaat nicht sichern". Translated by the author.

Gender and the 'Right-Wing Populist Complex', the Lack of a Systematic Intersectional Gender Lens

As these introductory random examples indicate, right-wing populist discourses almost everywhere are marked by an omnipresence of issues related to gender and sexuality—even though in very diverse and context-specific ways.[7] Such issues range from the alleged defence of women's (and sometimes gays') rights to the opposition to and contestation of women's, gender and reproductive rights, such as marriage for all, or access to free and safe abortion.[8] However, as the examples also show, aspects such anti-immigration attitudes, access to resources and welfare, or demography, are simultaneously being negotiated within particularly gendered frames. Most of these policies support traditional heteronormative family models and gender orders and oppose feminist and LGBTQI (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans Queer Intersexual) notions that support sexual diversity and pluralist forms of cohabitation. Most actors also seemingly support alleged pro-women's and gender rights arguments, often combined with anti-neoliberal or decidedly liberal-egalitarian arguments (based on negative notions of "freedom as freedom from"). The notion of a mere 'backlash' against emancipatory achievements thus does not seem sufficient to adequately grasp current workings of notions of gender and sexuality in right-wing populist discourse. While the field of research into right-wing populism is now quite established and is expanding very quickly, research on populism has been lacking a systematic inclusion of gender as a central dimension of right-wing populist logics, so far.[9] We argue that the use of

7 See Sarah L. De Lange/Liza M. Mügge: Gender and Right-Wing Populism in the Low Countries. Ideological Variations across Parties and Time, in: Patterns of Prejudice, 49:1–2 (2015), pp. 61–80, DOI: 10.1080/0031322X.2015.1014199.

8 See Gabriele Dietze/Julia Roth (eds.): Right-Wing Populism and Gender. European Perspectives and Beyond, Bielefeld 2020.

9 With exceptions such as: Birgit Sauer: Gesellschaftstheoretische Überlegungen zum europäischen Rechtspopulismus. Zum Erklärungspotenzial der Kategorie Geschlecht, in: Politische Vierteljahresschrift 58:1 (2017), pp. 3–22; Gabriele Dietze/Julia Roth (eds.): Right-Wing Populism and Gender. European Perspectives and Beyond, Bielefeld 2020; S. Abi-Hassan: "Populism and Gender", in: C. Rovira Kaltwasser/P. Taggart/P. Ochoa Espejo and P. Ostiguy (eds.): The Oxford Handbook on Populism, Oxford, UK 2017, pp. 2–22, p. 48 claims that gender in right-wing populism research "remains largely understudied". See also Sarah L. De Lange/Liza M. Mügge: Gender and Right-Wing Populism in the Low Countries: Ideological Variations across Parties and Time, in: Patterns of Prejudice, 49:1–2, (2015), pp. 61–80; Juliane Lang/ Christopher Fritzsche: Backlash, Neoreaktionäre Politiken oder Antifeminismus. Forschende Perspektiven auf Aktuelle Debatten um Geschlecht, in: Feministische Studien (2/2018), pp. 335–346, emphasise that the academic debate around the right-wing turn and gender has so far remained "heterogenous" and explorative, still lacking common terms and concepts.

gender notions in discourse is no side effect, but rather foundational to conservative, extremist and right-wing populist actors, who utilize it to catapult diverse arguments into the public discourse. This article suggests the notion of a "right-wing populist complex"[10] which serves to refer to more diverse actors than parties, movements, or organisations. Rather, it also addresses media discourses, narratives, and forms of action, such as women participating in right-wing projects, or parts of the bourgeois camp that have shifted to the right. To fully capture formations of this right-wing populist complex, it is also crucial to focus on the intersections of gender with other categories of social stratification, such as race, ethnicity, class and religion. Thereby, gender issues are structurally connected to globalisation and the effects of gendered neoliberal transformations and encompass questions pertaining to the international division of labour. The ways in which right-wing agents orchestrate the current shift to the right that can be observed in many contexts by evoking strong emotions provide a further decisive aspect of the mentioned complex. Also, the notion of a 'complex' enables us to include the impact of neoliberal logics and their structural similarities with neoconservatism in our argument,[11] as well as intersectional aspects, such as the interrelatedness of gender and racialised hierarchies. Moreover, right-wing populism is considered a logic, a discourse, and a "thin-centered ideology".[12] As such, populism is necessarily attached to other ideologies and it can take many shapes and relate to other concepts, forming context-specific interpretive frames to promote the respective political projects. Additionally, gender is understood as a field term in relation to the described "obsession with gender"[13] in discourses within the right-wing populist complex, and the role that women's and gender rights as well as antifeminism[14] play in these discourses. Following a populist logic, society is ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic camps, 'the pure people' (or, in the U.S., the 'heartland') and 'the corrupt elite', against which populist actors claim to express and em-

10 See Gabriele Dietze/Julia Roth (eds.): Right-Wing Populism and Gender. European Perspectives and Beyond.

11 Ailynn Torres: Latin American Neoconservatisms and Antifeminism: Freedom, Family, and Life, Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, International Research Group on Authoritarianism and Counter-Strategies, 2021, at: https://www.irgac.org/2021/02/04/latin-american-neoconservatisms-and-antifeminism-freedom-family-and-life/ (accessed on 18 March, 2021).

12 See Margaret Canovan: Two Strategies for the Study of Populism, in: Political Studies 30:4 (1982), pp. 544–552; Cas Mudde: The Populist Zeitgeist, in: Government and Opposition 39:4 (2004), pp. 541–563.

13 Gabriele Dietze/Julia Roth: Right-Wing Populism and Gender: A Preliminary Cartography of an Emergent Research Field, in: Gabriele Dietze/Julia Roth (eds.): Right-Wing Populism and Gender: European Perspectives and Beyond, Bielefeld 2020, pp. 7–22, p. 7.

14 Understood here as an analytical term, see Juliane Lang/Christopher Fritzsche: Backlash, neoreaktionäre Politiken oder Antifeminismus? Forschende Perspektiven auf aktuelle Debatten um Geschlecht, p. 339.

body a presumed 'general will' (*volonté generale*) of the people.[15] In times of crises and excessive demands, they rely on simple messages and emotional and affective appeal to provide simple answers to complex situations, often oriented towards a supposedly better past. For that matter, the construction of internal—such as the corrupt 'elite', media, feminists—and external enemies—such as immigrants, Muslims, international organisations—is crucial. Against this backdrop, the article in the following outlines five different right-wing populist "Patterns of Gendering"[16] that can be observed and carved out in right-wing discourses,[17] based on a review of the literature and an exemplary and qualitative discourse-analytical and semiotic analysis of media articles from a cultural-studies perspective:[18]

Pattern I: Gender as Affective Bridge in Mass Media

In mass media—and, increasingly, in social media—topics around gender and sexuality serve to break taboos, produce scandals and thereby attention. Gender is useful for that matter, because gender is still perceived as a 'natural' hierarchy by many and moreover, everyone feels gendered in a certain way and thus reacts affectively to the respective topics.

Pattern II: Appropriation of Women's Politics, Femonationalist Alliances

In right-wing conservative and populist discourse, we can see an increasing trend to justify anti-immigration politics as a defence of women's rights. Thereby, Others (immigrants) are gendered as more 'backwards' when it comes to gender equality. Through this 'outsourcing' of sexism (and homophobia) and the transference of gender issues to the 'racial'/'ethnic' (and/or 'religious') level, certain women and feminists increasingly side with right-wing claims.

Pattern III: White (Re)Masculinisation: Against 'Genderism' and Affirmative Action

By projecting feminists and gender studies/the so-called 'gender ideology'—as an existential threat (to children and the (heterosexual) family, and, ultimately, the nation) White, hegemonic masculinity can reclaim its position as 'the norm'.

15 See Cas Mudde/Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser: Populism: A Very Short Introduction, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

16 See Julia Roth: Intersectionality Strikes Back: Right-Wing Patterns of En-Gendering and Feminist Contestations in the Americas, in: Dietze Gabriele/Julia Roth (eds.): Right-Wing Populism and Gender. European Perspectives and Beyond, Bielefeld 2020, pp. 257–273.

17 Ibid.

18 Parts of my argument go back to my long essay entitled Can Intersectional Feminism Trump Populism? Right-Wing Trends and Intersectional Contestations in the Americas, and our introduction and my contribution to the book Right-Wing Populism and Gender: European Perspectives and Beyond, Bielefeld 2020.

Pattern IV: Reverse Anti-Colonialism: 'Gender Ideology' as 'Ideological Colonisation'

The Pope has called gender 'Ideological Colonisation', forged by feminists and international organisations, directed against poor countries. Through this reversal/appropriation of the victim's position (of the 'colonised'), otherwise unthinkable alliances between various actors can be organised against this threat which is perceived as 'global' and 'colonial'.

Pattern V: Ethno-sexism, Exclusive Intersectionality

Through shifting social inequalities, such as racial and class hierarchies, to the gender level (e.g. by depicting immigration as a threat to—'autochtonous'—women), respective fears can also be transferred from the socio-political and economic level to the gender plane. Sexism is projected onto others (perceived as 'external'), while one's own community can be depicted as emancipated.

'Sex Sells': Gender as an 'Affective Bridge' in (Mass) Media (*Pattern I*)

Despite their outright opposition to and defamation of classical journalism and media as part of the hostile 'elite', the (mass) media (including social media) play a fundamental role in right-wing populist discourses. As a "political logic"[19] and a "communicative scheme"[20] or "communicative pattern"[21], right-wing populism gains from its entanglements with the workings of mass media. Gender serves a particular function as a means to mobilise politics and catapult them into the public sphere. Often purporting to be saying what, supposedly, 'everyone was thinking", and "shunning the politically correct', current right-wing populists like Jair Bolsonaro and Donald Trump offer a new, or revived, exclusionary narrative. Such populist actors usually condemn the media as the enemy, regardless of the fact that they depend on media and take advantage of the shared logics of populism and media regarding attention economies and emotionality.[22] Since gender is still mostly perceived as a 'naturalised' hierarchy and most

19 Ernesto Laclau: On Populist Reason, London/New York 2005, p. 117.

20 Bernd Stegemann: Das Gespenst des Populismus. Ein Essay zur politischen Dramaturgie, Berlin 2017, p. 22.

21 Sérgio Costa: Im brasilianischen Wahlkampf ist Verleumdung Programm, in: Süddeutsche Zeitung online edition, 19 October 2018, at: https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/brasilien-wahlkampf-bolsonaro-1.4173643 (accessed on 30 March 2020).

22 See Paula Diehl: Why Do Right-Wing Populists Find So Much Appeal in Mass Media?, in: The Dahrendorf Forum, 20 October 2017, at: https://www.dahrendorf-forum.eu/why-do-right-wing-populists-find-so-much-appeal-in-mass-media/ (accessed on 30 March 2020).

people are affectively addressed by issues surrounding gender (and sexuality), gender provides a particularly useful arena for right-wing "affective governmentality".[23]

Proceeding from the observation that populism and mass media share a variety of similar logics and systemic affinities, mass media—and, increasingly, social media—play a crucial role for the current right-wing populist creations of echo chambers or 'bubbles'. Since (particularly commercial) media depend on large audiences, populist actors help them gain viewers through their continuous disregard for taboo, which the employ to cause scandal and thus attention. These actors also draw recipients' attention to media through the affective appeal and simplicity of their arguments. Gender—expressed in paradoxical patterns ranging from sexist and misogynist 'locker room talk' for causing scandals, to 'anti-genderism' against feminists and gender studies and 'sexual exceptionalism' against immigrants—is increasingly interpolated by numerous right-wing populist actors. It serves to affectively bridge the contradictions caused by seemingly emancipatory arguments in favour of 'women's rights' (against immigrants) and a re-traditionalisation paradigm in favour of revised gender roles and family models—or "dynamic paradoxes"[24]—that are constitutive of right-wing populist discourses. Moreover, the use of gender as a platform in mass and social media by right-wing populists is crucial for their racist and anti-immigrant mobilisations.

Appropriating Women's Politics for Femonationalist Alliances (*Pattern II*)

Numerous right-wing populist actors transfer the political hierarchy to the gender hierarchy through the defence of a particular, hegemonic, masculinism. During the election campaigns of Trump in the U. S. 2016 and Bolsonaro in Brazil 2017, women formed a considerable part of the electorate, despite the candidates' outright sexist and misogynist remarks. In both contexts, groups of (predominantly White) women spoke out publicly and campaigned for the candidates, e. g. the 'Women for Trump' in the U. S. or the 'Mulheres com Jair Bolsonaro Presidente' (Women with President Jair Bolsonaro) in Brazil. A common argument among these groups is that gender equality has already been achieved, and the different roles taken are the result of individu-

23 Birgit Sauer: Authoritarian Right-Wing Populism as Masculinist Identity Politics. The Role of Affects, in: Gabriele Dietze/Julia Roth (eds.): Right-Wing Populism and Gender. European Perspectives and Beyond, Bielefeld 2020, pp. 25–43.

24 Gabriele Dietze: Why Are Women Attracted to Right-Wing Populism? Sexual Exceptionalism, Emancipation Fatigue, and New Maternalism, in: Gabriele Dietze/Julia Roth (eds.): Right-Wing Populism and Gender: European Perspectives and Beyond, Bielefeld 2020, pp. 147–166.

al choices and values, while feminism discriminates against men. Moreover, female groups often 'gain' (e. g. recognition and political positions) through their alliances with nationalists. The right-wing populist demographic argument that (White/'autochtonous') women are crucial for the (reproduction of) the nation increases this support.

A recent study by the German Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) demonstrates how right-wing populist parties present themselves as defenders of women's rights (particularly White women) and simultaneously advocate anti-emancipatory positions.[25] The comparative study shows that while men still dominate most populist parties, the number of women is increasing and women are also becoming more and more prominent in leadership positions. Often, these women are among the strongest supporters of anti-feminist and anti-genderist politics while supporting their parties' politics to limit immigration or affirmative action programs and emphasise a distinct cultural identity. In Trump's rhetoric, as expressed in his argument that his wall at the Mexican border served to keep "Mexican rapists"[26] out, he defended the 'freedom' of (White) American women, while repeatedly stating that he supported traditional marriage. However, Trump was well aware that he needs to react to certain emancipatory ideas and at least create paradoxes and deflect attention from a clear line of his gender and sexual politics. This is evident in the fact that he did not—or at least not publicly—condemn feminists, but vaguely stated "I wouldn't say I'm a feminist", "I'm for women, I'm for men, I'm for everyone"[27]. His strategy implies the appropriation of femininity for the (re)enforcement of masculinity and patriarchy while 'selling' this appropriation as happening with the consent of women, as some sort of emancipatory politics. This appropriation can also serve to promote racist nativist and anti-immigrant politics (in favour of the White women of the 'heartland'). Trump's daughter Ivanka, who represents a strong, independent, neoliberal feminist type, helps Trump to attenuate and cushion his scandals.[28] The fact that Trump seemingly 'needed' Ivanka in order to make his masculinist sexist stance palatable to his female and

25 Elisa Gutsche (ed.): Triumph of the Women? The Female Face of the Populist & Far Right in Europe, Berlin 2018.

26 "Trump Planned 'Rapists' Comments About Mexicans", by Christina Wilkie, The Huffington Post, Sept. 30, 2016, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/trump-mexicans-rapists_n_57eeb77ce4b082aad9bb342d (accessed on 18 March, 2021).

27 "Trump: 'I wouldn't say I'm a feminist'", CNN, by Caroline Kenny, January 29, 2018, https://edition.cnn.com/2018/01/28/politics/president-trump-not-feminist-piers-morgan-interview/index.html, (accessed on 18 March, 2021).

28 Will Worley: Donald Trump 'reduced Ivanka to tears' by refusing to apologise fully for 'grabbing women' comments, in: The Independent online edition, 2 May 2017, at: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/donald-trump-ivanka-tears-grabbing-women-comments-refuse-apology-first-daughter-oval-office-white-a7713616.html (accessed on 30 March 2020).

conservative voters, however, indicates that the workings of gender as an epistemic field within right-wing discourse must be read as a pattern that is more complex than a simple pushback.

Bolsonaro chose the (female) evangelical pastor and severe anti-feminist Damares Alves as minister of family affairs, human rights and indigenous people (of a new ministry for these three fields, for which he abolished the human rights ministry). Alves, who is decidedly "Pro-life" and has emphasised that "women are born to be mothers"[29], has been met with concern by indigenous representatives and feminists. Interestingly, Alves defended same-sex marriage, which is legal in Brazil, and declared her support for LGBT movements. However, she is also opposed to sexual education in schools, reflecting Bolsonaro's will to scrap sexual education from public schools and forbid the use of concepts such as "gender perspective"[30]. The new ministry led by Alves will also be in charge of the National Foundation of the Indigenous (FUNAI), a previously independent institution that regulates issues related to the indigenous communities in the country. FUNAI is in charge of protecting the areas inhabited by indigenous groups and is one of Brazil's last lines of defence against extractivist projects in the territory. Tying it to the ministry will put it at Alves's and Bolsonaro's hands, who are against reservations because of the limitations they impose on private companies' interests. They thus continue racist anti-indigenous politics that colonial power structures have kept intact for centuries.

Religiously motivated conservative women like Alves in many places identify with naturalised traditional gender roles, justifying their support of right-wing politics with their interest in the well-being and protection of children, family, and the nation, as well as, often, 'Pro-life' politics. They gain power by aligning themselves with men through racism. Thus, in the same manner in which women are important for male populists, racialised Others are important for right-wing women. By demonising feminism as 'anti-male', 'sexist', and exclusive, the 'Women for Trump' and 'Women for Bolsonaro' movements further represent a form of Occidentalist (or 'Western') self-reassurance. Claiming to be in the possession of a better, more advanced gender regime enables the participating women to see themselves as fully emancipated and not affected by structural discrimination. While sexism and gender discrimination is projected onto and reduced to other (Muslim, indigenous, non-Western etc.) women

29 Dom Phillips: Bolsonaro to abolish human rights ministry in favour of family values, in: The Guardian online edition, 10 September 2018, at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/dec/06/outcry-over-bolsonaros-plan-to-put-conservative-in-charge-of-new-family-and-women-ministry (accessed on 30 March 2020).

30 Ibid.; Telesur: Bolsonaro Abolishes Human Rights Ministry For 'Family Values', in: Telesur English online edition, 7 December 2018, at: https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/Bolsonaro-Abolishes-Human-Rights-Ministry-For-Family-Values-20181207-0021.html (accessed on 30 March 2020).

and 'cultures', White/'autochtonous' women can feel advantaged through their "femonationalist"[31] alliances with White men against immigrants.

Both the Trump and the Bolsonaro presidency follow the progressive, pluralist governments by Lula da Silva and Barack Obama and the (relative) success of the first female presidential candidates: Dilma Rousseff, who ran Brazil from 2011 to (her impeachment in) 2016 and Hillary Clinton, the first woman to run for the U.S. presidency. Gender played a decisive role in both campaigns, since the opponents of both female candidates condemned their femininity and ridiculed their left-wing predecessors as 'weak' and feminised. In Obama's case it was his racialised masculinity—Trump famously sought to prove that Obama was no U.S. American citizen due to his second name "Hussein"—through which the candidates positioned themselves. Similar gendered strategies were used by the political Right against presidential candidate Hillary Clinton in the 2016 election campaign, during which Trump and his supporters focused much of his campaign on delegitimising and criminalising Hillary Clinton.[32] When political differences, as well as racial and class hierarchies are transferred to the gender hierarchy, the binary becomes legible and affectively accessible in terms of the gender binary. Misogynist descriptions, and thus 'gender', not only served to disparage Rousseff, but it also formed the cognitive and "affective bridge"[33] between accusations. In both cases, through the openly misogynist hatred for the oppositional women politicians who were cast as members of the ruling elite, the right-wing populist candidates constructed the alternative candidate as the return of the strong patriarchal White leader.

AfD chairman Björn Höcke in Germany followed a similar pattern by projecting immigrant males as a threat against which White German males had to re-discover their manhood (and protect 'their' women).[34] Birgit Sauer has thus described right-

31 See Sara R. Farris: Femonationalism and the 'Regular' Army of Labor Called Migrant Women, in: History of the Present: A journal of Critical History 2:2 (2012), pp. 184–199; Idem.: In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism, Durham 2017.

32 See Amanda Hess: How a Fractious Women's Movement Came to Lead the Left, in: The New York Times online edition, 7 February 2017, at: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/07/magazine/how-a-fractious-womens-movement-came-to-lead-the-left.html (accessed on 30 March 2020).

33 Gabriele Dietze: Sexueller Exzeptionalismus. Überlegenheitsnarrative in Immigrationsabwehr und Rechtspopulismus, Bielefeld 2019.

34 In his speech at the convention of the German extremist right-wing party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in 2015, the chairman of the party's parliamentary group in the federal state of Thuringia, Björn Höcke, claimed that "we have to re-discover our manhood. Because only if we rediscover our manhood, will we be manly. And only if we're manly we will be well-fortified, and we have to become well-fortified, dear friends!" Translation by the author.

wing populist rhetorics as White "masculinist identity politics"[35], a pattern that we can also see in the discourses of Alt-Right ('Alternative Right') male activists, online and offline.[36] The Alt-Right is a far-right, loosely connected, White-supremacist, nationalist movement based in the U.S.A. that mainly organises men. They mainly organise online, thereby reaching followers on a global scale. The mass murderers of the attacks by Anders Breivik in Utoaya (Norway) in 2011, by Brenton Tarrant in Christchurch (New Zealand) in 2019, and by Stephan Balliet in Halle (Germany) in 2020, as well as by Tobias Rathjen, in Hanau (Germany) in 2020 have been associated with these circles. However, less radical defenders of such nativist ideologies can no longer afford to exclude women. Rather, they rely on the solidarity and support of *particular* women. The mentioned FES study demonstrates that right-wing populist logics recently pursue a politics of "for women, against feminists"[37], and, one might add, against "genderism"/"gender ideology" and LGBTQI activism.[38]

Against 'Gender Ideology' and Affirmative Action (*Pattern III*)

Through the opposition to gender politics and left-wing agendas—which reconnects to long-standing historic exclusionary ideologies—right-wing populists have managed to unite and create alliances between a number of actors, including religious groups from Christian churches, fundamentalist Muslims and Jews, as well as far right parties and conservatives. Often, the agendas of these groups include either the opposition to neoliberal devastation of welfare programs and state protection and individualisation (i. e. through the idealisation of the heteronormative family as a bulwark against the threats of globalization and precarization), or a structurally similar logic (i. e. freedom

35 Birgit Sauer: Authoritarian Right-Wing Populism as Masculinist Identity Politics. The Role of Affects, in: Gabriele Dietze/Julia Roth (eds.): Right-Wing Populism and Gender. European Perspectives and Beyond, Bielefeld 2020, pp. 25–43.

36 See Simon Strick: The Alternative Right, Masculinities, and Ordinary Affect, in: Gabriele Dietze/Julia Roth (eds.): Right-Wing Populism and Gender. European Perspectives and Beyond, Bielefeld 2020, pp. 233–259.

37 Elisa Gutsche (ed.): Triumph of the Women? The Female Face of the Populist & Far Right in Europe. See also Ailynn Torres: Latin American Neoconservatisms and Antifeminism: Freedom, Family, and Life, Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, International Research Group on Authoritarianism and Counter-Strategies, 2021, at: https://www.irgac.org/2021/02/04/latin-american-neoconservatisms-and-antifeminism-freedom-family-and-life/ (accessed on 18 March, 2021).

38 See Julia Roth: Can Feminism Trump Populism? Right-Wing Trends and Intersectional Contestations in the Americas; Idem.: Intersectionality Strikes Back: Right-Wing Patterns of En-Gendering and Feminist Contestations in the Americas, pp. 257–273.

as freedom from state intervention.[39] Furthermore, affirmative action is often opposed because it is perceived to privilege the "undeserving" ones—such as feminists and African Americans or immigrants—while others have to continue to stand in line.[40] Immigrants are projected as being a predominantly 'external' menace to the national citizens, particularly to 'autochtonous' women (imagined as mothers, educators, carers) and the nation, but also as competitors where access to resources and mobility is concerned. Complementary to this, many right-wing actors have increasingly constructed 'gender ideology', 'the gender craze', or 'genderism' as one of the central society-internal threats to children, families, and thus as an existential threat to (the reproduction of) the nation. The Trump administration has sought to stop transgender people from serving in the army and has legally challenged civil rights protections for trans individuals embedded in the nation's health care law, insisting on defining gender as strictly biologically determined.[41] The Trump administration even attempted to delete questions about gender identity from a 2020 census survey and a national survey of elderly citizens and to remove 'gender' from United Nations (UN) human rights documents. Several agencies have also repealed policies that recognised gender identity in schools, prisons and homeless shelters.[42] Thereby, Trump has met the demands of conservative Christian actors like the former director of the DeVos Center for Religion and Civil Society at the Heritage Foundation (a think tank in Washington), Roger Severino, who was among the conservatives who strongly opposed the Obama administration's expansion of sex to include gender identity.

Having been a congressman for 28 years, Bolsonaro looks back on a long career in politics, during which he already promoted racist positions he can now push with more force. Bolsonaro was a fierce opponent to the 2011 Supreme Court decision that legalised the recognition of same-sex couples, supported by the evangelical parliamentary block which seeks to undermine the expansion of sexual and reproductive rights, same sex marriage and the right to legal, free and safe abortion and was also crucial

39 Weronika Grzebalska et al.: Gender as symbolic glue: How 'gender' became an umbrella term for the rejection of the (neo)liberal order, in: Luxemburg magazine, 2018, p. 34 at: https://www.zeitschrift-luxemburg.de/lux/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/LUX_Breaking_Feminism_E-Paper.pdf (accessed on 30 March 2020).

40 See Arlie Russell Hochschild: Strangers in their Own Land. Anger and Mourning on the American Right, New York 2016.

41 Erica L. Green et al.: 'Transgender' Could Be Defined Out of Existence Under Trump Administration, in: The New York Times online edition, 21 October 2018, at: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/21/us/politics/transgender-trump-administration-sex-definition.html (accessed on 30 March 2020).

42 Julian Borger: Trump administration wants to remove 'gender' from UN human rights documents, The Guardian online edition, 25 October 2018, at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/24/trump-administration-gender-transgender-united-nations (accessed on 30 March 2020).

for his successful presidential candidacy. Demonising them as a "gay kit", Bolsonaro led a campaign against inclusionary educational materials developed by the Ministry of Education, which were to challenge discrimination and violence against LGBTQI groups.[43] After Bolsonaro castigated the program as a menace to the sexual binary and to Brazilian children and families, the materials were abandoned by the Ministry. And yet, seemingly paradoxically, Bolsonaro also denied being a homophobe, when confronted with a video by U.S. journalists showing two gay men having sex in public, which he had posted during the carnival. The Trump administration in the U.S.A. and several European governments have recently developed a similar anti-gender rhetoric, as can be observed with the AfD in Germany, Victor Orbán's anti-gender crusade in Hungary, as well as similar movements in Poland, Spain, or Austria. Already since the 1990s, similar narratives had been circulated in conservative Catholic and conservative intellectual circles.[44]

Through the idea of a globally spread menace of 'gender ideology', this perceived permanent threat is projected onto the global scale and given a religious dimension. It is discussed and framed as a fundamental and all-encompassing menace.

Reverse Anti-Colonialism: 'Gender Ideology' as 'Ideological Colonisation' (in Radical Religious and Femoglobal Alliances) (*Pattern IV*)

Following a populist logics, global elites are demonised and the 'ordinary people' defended by equating gender egalitarianism with colonisation. Thus, through the appropriation of an anti-colonialism frame, or the anti-colonial frame envisioned by the right, the opposition to the empty signifier gender provides them with a 'new language'. In the form of a "Reverse Anti-Colonialism", notions of gender are used to present religious conservatives as an embattled minority.[45] This pattern also relies on the notion of 'Other' sexual and gender regimes against which the supposedly superior order (upholding the 'right' moral/religious values) can be imagined. Right-wing populism accordingly functions as a relief and a reactionary gesture in the complex

43 The Conversation: 2019. How Jair Bolsonaro used 'fake news' to win power, in: The Conversation online, 8 January 2019, at: https://theconversation.com/how-jair-bolsonaro-used-fake-news-to-win-power-109343 (accessed on 30 March 2020).

44 Mary Ann Case: Trans Formations in the Vatican's War on 'Gender Ideology', in: Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 44:3 (2019), pp. 639–664.

45 See Julia Roth: Can Feminism Trump Populism? Right-Wing Trends and Intersectional Contestations in the Americas.

world of (neo)liberalism, a relief which is expressed through hatred and construction of a perceived threat from the liberal/superior/emancipated world.[46]

The so-called 'gender ideology' and affirmative action are perceived as part of a 'left', 'liberal' discourse resulting from the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s (and the related 'sexual revolution') and demonised as privileging undeserving minorities. They are depicted as severely limiting social mobility and access to success for the 'native' majority which, in this mind set, rightfully, and naturally 'deserves' them. The term 'gender ideology' originated with the Vatican in the 1990s, when a strategy that came to be known as 'gender mainstreaming' entered politics as a means of progressive efforts to make gender equality a central focus of UN documents and policies. Without using the term 'gender' yet, the Ratzinger Report from the 1980s had already put together all of the elements of what conservative opponents would come to call the "ideology of gender" (significantly before the Beijing Conference on Women).[47] For the Vatican, the term 'gender' would serve to deconstruct sex differences and lead to the dismantling of traditional family values. Pope Francis introduced the notion of 'ideological colonisation' to condemn governments and NGOs (non-governmental organisations) from the EU and the U. S. or other multinational or supranational institutions that tie grants for the education of the poor to educational materials on sexual diversity. Together with the 'poor' victims of such measures, conservative Catholic gender hierarchies can thus be portrayed as forming part of a minority under attack. A similar pattern can also be observed among (predominantly but not exclusively White male) internet activists around the so-called 'Alt-Right', who see 'gender' as an oppressive regime and themselves not as aggressors, but in a condition of permanent danger. Through this position, Francis has gained approval far beyond the traditional conservatives, finding "resonance with the allegedly colonised, from the global South to Eastern Europe".[48] In East Eu-

46 For a more nuanced understanding, see Sarah L. De Lange/Liza M. Mügge: Gender and Right-Wing Populism in the Low Countries, p. 62, who distinguish between "national populist" and "neoliberal populist" parties whose programs, rhetorics/discourses and policies regarding gender differ respectively.

47 Mary Ann Case: Trans Formations in the Vatican's War on 'Gender Ideology', in: Signs: Journal of Women in Cul-ture and Society 44:3 (2019), p. 640.

48 Ibid., p. 650. See also Elżbieta Korolczuk/Agnieszka Graff: Gender as 'Ebola from Brussels': The Anticolonial Frame and the Rise of Illiberal Populism, in: Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 43:4 (2018), pp. 797–821, who trace the ways in which the "global Right" recently selectively borrows from liberal-left and feminist discourses for constructing a new, illiberal universalism by positioning the family as foundational unity of societies and presenting religious conservatives as a minority (p. 815). As Graff and Korolczuk argue, the respective actors do so based on an "anticolonial frame" as a discursive strategy for anti-feminist and anti-capitalist mobilisation, thus combining a critique of neoliberalism and globalisation in order to protect the "ordinary people", the poor and the marginalised from corrupt global elites (p. 798).

rope, the narrative of "gender ideology" as an imperial Western import prevails. Gender seems to serve a particular function within the Vatican's discourses as well as in the context of the increasing alliances between conservative Catholic actors, right-wing populist protagonists, and radical right-wing movements. The right-wing Catholic-inspired discourse offers such actors political representation, affirms their traditional views and ways of life, and defends them against the challenges they perceive. In Latin America, anti-gender campaigns have gained momentum against the backdrop of the rise of Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal religious groups and the simultaneous weakening of progressive—and partly female—presidencies in Argentina, Brazil and Chile. Gender ideology, thus, has come to serve the function of an 'enemy within' and simultaneously as an 'outside' global threat. Gender, thus, provides a crucial arena within populist logics by constructing this enemy as a threat to the community and its (supposedly shared) moral values (the populist *volonté générale,* here interpreted as being in tune with certain religious values). Gender can constantly be re-signified and can create different projections against which there is a felt need to defend, for which the religiously motivated/justified "moral panic"[49] caused by sexual politics serves to turn "gender ideology" into as an existential threat (to the 'natural', nuclear, heteronormative family and the homogenous nation), and to what is perceived as 'order' per se.

'Ethno-Sexism' and 'Exclusive Intersectionality' (*Pattern V*)

If, as explained before, right-wing populists pursue a politics of "exclusive intersectionality"[50] or "intersectionality from above"[51] by denying the equality and rights of Others, they are provoking intersectional responses, since all minorities and emancipatory programs are attacked. 'Illegal' and unwanted immigration is mobilised as a central trope and as a severe threat to the very existence of the 'autochthonous culture' and population by many right-wing populists. Both Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro work toward strict immigration policies, through the policing and militarisation of their national borders. They both also mobilise seemingly feminist (or pro-women) ar-

49 Gayle Rubin: Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality, in: Carole S. Vance (ed.): Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality, London 1984, pp. 267–293.

50 See Monika Mokre/Birte Siim: European Public Spheres and Intersectionality, in: Birte Siim/Monika Mokre (eds.): Negotiating Gender and Diversity in an Emergent European Public Sphere, Basingstoke2013, pp. 22–40.

51 Birgit Sauer: Intersectionality from Above – Framing Muslim Headscarves, in: European Policy Debates, Paper Presented at the ECPR General Conference Sciences Po, Bordeaux, September 4–7, 2013 (unpublished).

guments and frames which they rid of their emancipatory content to negotiate topics like demography, citizenship, belonging and immigration. Right after his inauguration, Trump began to dismantle the DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) program for temporary protection from deportation and the right to live, study and work in the USA for migrants' children which had been granted under the Obama administration. He implemented his 'Muslim ban' prohibiting visas for citizens of seven predominantly Muslim countries, and he promised to build a militarised wall between the U.S. and Mexico to curb illegal immigration. Furthermore, Trump has continuously emphasised his goal to give up the current *jus solis* of U.S. citizenship law. He has often argued that this law motivated Mexican migrant women to come to the U.S. to have children in order to secure U.S. citizenship, as expressed in the discourse on so-called "anchor babies".[52] His statement emphasises the interdependence and entanglements of gender and racist anti-immigration paradigms in right-wing discourse and logics. Evoking a similar ethno-sexist stereotype as the one that was at work in the so-called 'New Year's Events' in Cologne, Germany, in 2015/16, Trump, in his rhetoric figure of the 'Mexican rapist', projected the threat of sexual violence onto an outside enemy: immigrant, non-white men, from whom 'women' had to be protected. On the one hand, this form of "ethno-sexism"[53]could be used to justify restrictions in immigration policies. On the other hand, the 'proper' society could be imagined as free from sexual violence.

Bolsonaro, like Trump, has repeatedly rhetorically drawn parallels between the nation and a family home, in phrases such as "our house […] our Brazil".[54] Directly after his inauguration in January 2019, Bolsonaro withdrew from the UN pact on migration—which the Trump government had refused to sign to begin with.[55] He also implemented strict border regimes, particularly in the North of Brazil and currently at the

52 See Manuela Boatcă/Julia Roth: Unequal and Gendered: Notes on the Coloniality of Citizenship Rights, in: Current Sociology 64:2 (2016), pp. 191–212; Manuela Boatcă/Julia Roth: Women on the Fast Track? Coloniality of Citizenship and Embodied Social Mobility, in: Samuel Con/Rae L. Blumberg (eds.): Power of the Purse: Global Causes and Consequences of Women's Economic Power, Los Angeles 2019, pp. 162–174.

53 Gabriele Dietze: Rechtspopulismus und Geschlecht. Paradox und Leitmotif, in: Femina Politica 27 (2018), pp. 34–46.

54 Marcia Vera Espinoza/Leiza Brumat: Brazil elections 2018: how will Bolsonaro's victory affect migration policy in Brazil and South America?, in: LSE Latin America and Caribbean blog , 25 October 2018, at: https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/latamcaribbean/2018/10/25/brazil-elections-2018-how-will-a-bolsonaro-victory-affect-migration-policy-in-brazil-and-beyond/ (accessed on 30 March 2020).

55 Francesca Paris: Brazilian President Bolsonaro Withdraws from U.N. Compact on Migration, in: NPR online edition, 9 January 2019, at: https://www.npr.org/2019/01/09/683634412/brazilian-president-bolsonaro-withdraws-from-u-n-compact-on-migration?t=1594980645621 (accessed on 30 March 2020).

border to Venezuela.[56] Tellingly, during his March 2019 visit with Trump, Bolsonaro promised to remove the visa 'restrictions' for U.S. citizens (which are/were actually reciprocal, since Brazil is/was the only country to introduce the same rules for obtaining visa for U.S. citizens that the U.S. requires from that country's own citizens).

To different extents, representatives of the pro-Trump or pro-Bolsonaro movements or figures like openly gay politician Alice Weidel of the AfD party in Germany represent the phenomenon of such forms of exploitation and co-optation of feminist themes by anti-Islam and xenophobic campaigns which Sara R. Farris describes as "femonationalism".[57] Similar arguments can also be found in the rhetoric of certain gay and LGBTQI groups who join a nationalist discourse with racist and xenophobic arguments and are often co-opted by right-wing groups, a phenomenon Jasbir Puar has referred to as "homonationalism".[58] Farris analyses how this practice also serves an economic function, as neoliberal civic integration policies and feminist groups include Muslim and non-Western immigrant women into the segregated domestic and care industries, all the while claiming to promote their emancipation. Thus, through the ethno-sexist narrative of the immigrant or Muslim sexual perpetrator, purportedly oppressed and silenced masculinities can imagine themselves as 'protectors', once again. For right-wing populists, the transgression of the naturalised gender and ethnic/cultural/national borders threatens the community's/nation's alleged homogeneity. Through the strategic use of gender and ethnicity for processes of Othering dynamics or the exclusion of the transgressor of this order/community and the suspension of marginalised groups such as immigrants can be justified.[59] In analogy to the posture of an 'American exceptionalism' (positioning the U.S. as the best and most 'completed' version of all societies and democracies), Gabriele Dietze has defined a discourse of negative external ascription intended to produce a sense of one's own superiority and to distract from one's own emancipatory deficits (and misogyny and sexism) as "sexual exceptionalism"[60], which Trump's politics have illustrated very clearly.

The paradox consists in the *simultaneity* of traditional core convictions and an "emancipation performance" which is used to modernise right-wing gender models

56 Marcia Vera Espinoza/Leiza Brumat: Brazil elections 2018: how will Bolsonaro's victory affect migration policy in Brazil and South America?, in: LSE Latin America and Caribbean blog, 25 October 2018, at: https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/latamcaribbean/2018/10/25/brazil-elections-2018-how-will-a-bolsonaro-victory-affect-migration-policy-in-brazil-and-beyond/ (accessed on 30 March 2020).

57 Sara R. Farris: Femonationalism and the 'Regular' Army of Labor Called Migrant Women, pp. 184–199; Sara R. Farris: In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism.

58 Jasbir K. Puar: Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times. Durham, London 2007.

59 Julia Roth: Intersectionality Strikes Back: Right-Wing Patterns of En-Gendering and Feminist Contestations in the Americas, pp. 257–273.

60 Gabriele Dietze: Das Ereignis Köln, in: Femina Politica 1 (2016), pp. 93–102.

and to uncouple them from radical right-wing stigma. These contradictions are not resolved, but are in motion and are being re-negotiated constantly.[61]

Outlook

Since right-wing discourse has become more complex, as we can also see in the mentioned introductory examples, this article has shown that the narrative of a mere 'backlash' towards prior conservative gender hierarchies is insufficient to explain the current dynamics. Aware that they need to cater to a broad range of possible supporters, right-wing actors often trigger 'dynamic paradoxes' such as the alleged mobilisation to protect women's sexual liberties. For the most part, such mobilisations simultaneously promote an anti-immigration paradigm, depicting immigrant males as oppressors and as a threat to 'autochtonous' women (and sometimes LGBTQIs) and their rights. Such more intricate arguments also require more complex analysis and critique in order to adequately address the recent articulation of right-wing manners of gendering.

The outlined right-wing populist 'Patterns of Gendering' demonstrate how gender (and sexuality) serves as a platform, an arena, and an affective bridge in the respective discourses which are used to mobilise diverse topics. Consequently, the alleged defence of women's rights—mostly against thus-proclaimed 'alien' aggressors—provides the basis for 'femonationalist' alliances of certain women against immigrants. Through the construction of 'genderism' or a 'gender ideology' as an existential threat to ('normal') women and the nation, White/hegemonic masculinity can, in many cases, be justified again (mostly in the form of the strong, masculine populist leader). This becomes even easier through the ethno-sexist projection of sexism and homophobia onto racialised Others, whereby one's own position is perceived as free from sexual and gender violence, to justify the exclusion of the transgressor of this order and the suspension of marginalised groups such as immigrants.

The mentioned examples have demonstrated how gender serves a twofold function in right-wing populist discourse: on the one hand, gender is particularly useful for mobilising a new common sense and a "new hegemonic compromise"[62] based on the long-standing sexual binary that still marks people's habits and appeals to the everyday experiences of most people. Since gender is incorporated into "chains of equivalence"[63] between different requests, gender topics are an especially valuable field

61 Gabriele Dietze: Rechtspopulismus und Geschlecht. Paradox und Leitmotiv, pp. 35–36.
62 Birgit Sauer: Gesellschaftstheoretische Überlegungen zum europäischen Rechtspopulismus. Zum Erklärungspotenzial der Kategorie Geschlecht, p. 14.
63 Ernesto Laclau: On Populist Reason, p. 84.

for creating hegemony, turning these requests into demands or to "name all wrongs"[64]. By rendering the gender orders of Others problematic if not unacceptable, right-wing discourses on the other hand 'prove' their Occidental superiority. Imaginations of the 'untamed masculinity' of "other" men are part and parcel of this imaginary. These gender stereotypical and racist ascriptions are instrumentalised for the outsourcing of emancipatory issues within a nation's borders and simultaneously create a threat that justifies the exclusion of perceived aggressors. The borders and/or limits of citizenship and belonging are also negotiated through this division, while downplaying the group's own emancipation deficits and maintaining the traditional binary and heterosexual/-normative gender order. Moreover, those who have been fighting for and insisting on these rights, such as feminists and LGBTQI activists, are demonised as representing a threat to (heteronormative) families and the sexual binary, as well as to the (reproduction of the) nation. Additionally, through a sense of community and superiority and the outsourcing of the perceived threat to both 'gender ideology' and 'external rapists', attention is deflected from the effects of globalisation and social inequalities.

As we have also seen, gender issues and arguments serve to push racist and nativist arguments forward. An intersectional gender perspective—or, a "critical feminist theory of populism"[65] on gender patterns evoked by the right-wing populist complex reveals the tensions and contradictions within the right-wing populist discourse, such as those between class, nationality, and gender, which can then be critically examined and hence serve to make the anti-pluralistic and anti-liberal project of right-wing populism visible and workable. Thus, the entanglements of racism, ethno-sexism and sexism in right-wing populist discourses render feminist, queer, anti-racist and intersectional scholarship urgently required tools in the field of right-wing populism research. They are essential to grasping the different dimensions of the workings of gender for complex right-wing populist discourses.

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64 Birgit Sauer: Gesellschaftstheoretische Überlegungen zum europäischen Rechtspopulismus. Zum Erklärungspotenzial der Kategorie Geschlecht, p. 14.

65 Julia Roth: The Gendered Politics of Right-Wing Populism and Intersectional Feminist Contestations, in: Michael Oswald/Elena Broda (eds.): The Palgrave Handbook of Populism, Basingstoke 2021 (in print).