

Constructing ‘the people’

An intersectional analysis of right-wing concepts of democracy and citizenship in Austria

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This article analyses right-wing populist constructions of ‘the people’ emerging at the intersections of ethnicized ‘othering’ and gendered differences within groups. We argue that these constructions are in stark contrast to the liberal notion of citizenship, which we understand to be the basis for the *demos*. Right-wing populism constructs its politics of belonging beyond rights, i.e. ‘the people’ is defined as a community through identity with the political leader, rather than as a political entity marked by different interests and endowed with rights, which could be represented politically. We argue that it is important to not only analyse practices of ‘othering’ and exclusion, but also the appeal to the ‘we’-group in order to understand right-wing populist success. Empirically our Critical Frame Analysis focuses on the Austrian context and on the FPÖ, which has been a forerunner in the ‘modernization’ of right-wing extremism and the development of right-wing populism in Europe.

Keywords: right-wing populism, extremism, Austria, democracy, gender, citizenship

1. Introduction: Globalized struggles for right-wing political hegemony

The success of right-wing groups in terms of election results and – maybe even more important – in terms of political agenda setting has been a challenge for European liberal democracies as well as an issue for Political Science since the early 2000s. For example, the *Front National* (National Front, FN) has developed into a major actor in France’s politics as have the *Dansk Folkeparti* (Danish People’s Party, DF) or the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). Germany long seemed to be immune to political strategies based primarily on anti-Muslim and

anti-immigration resentments, but the more recent success of the *Alternative für Deutschland* (Alternative for Germany, AfD) proved that this is no longer the case. The term right-wing populism is most often used to describe these actors (see e.g. Taggart 2000; Canovan 2004; Mudde 2004 and 2007), albeit differences within this party family complicate clear-cut definitions (Mudde 1996).¹ Many (but not all) of the parties and political groups which are termed right-wing populist were – and often still are – part of the traditional, often elitist, right-wing extremism which is rooted in fascism and National Socialism (Campani and Sauer 2017). Some of these extremist parties adopted populist communicative strategies in order to become more acceptable to the political mainstream and to maximise their voter turnout. Other right-wing parties have been newly founded as populist parties, capitalizing on feelings of uncertainty and distrust of governments, of ruling parties and the European Union in the context of neo-liberal restructuring and cuts in social welfare across Europe.

What unites these parties and groups despite their different backgrounds is their specific right-wing populist world-view, which hinges on a double antagonism, i.e. on the simultaneous opposition first to a ruling elite, the ‘establishment’ (e.g. the EU or ‘Brussels’, the ‘old’ parties or mainstream media) that allegedly works against ‘the people’ and second to ‘others’ (immigrants, asylum seekers, Muslims, but also LGBTIQ-people, and feminists), who are represented as posing a threat to the autochthonous population (Reinfeldt 2000, 133).²

The literature on right-wing populism has discussed reasons for the success of these parties and movements in the last decades (Poglia Miletì et al. 2002; Priester 2012; Wiegel 2013). It has analysed right-wing discourses from different theoretical and empirical perspectives characterizing right-wing populism thus as racist, xeno-racist, islamophobic or anti-Muslim (Pelinka 2002; Krzyzanowski and Wodak 2008; Fekete 2009; Fekete 2004; Hafez 2010; Hall 1985; Klammer 2013; Solomos 2013; Ajanovic, Mayer and Sauer 2015). Research moreover detected discursive constructions of ‘the people’, the ‘we’. In right-wing populists’ double antagonism ‘the people’ is on the one hand constructed ‘vertically’ as “ordinary people” opposed to the elite (Canovan 1999, 5) and on the other hand ‘horizontally’, positioned against ‘the others’ (Pelinka 2002, 284f.; Krastev 2007, 105; Reisigl 2012, 141). In right-wing populist discourses ‘the people’ hence becomes “our people” (Canovan 1999, 5) and national belonging and non-belonging become central. Right-wing populism thus invokes both of these antagonistic traditions and capitalizes on the tensions arising.

1. Mudde (2004, 543) defines populism as a “thin centered ideology”, which can be attached to other “thick ideologies” such as racism, nationalism, sexism as well as socialism.

2. LGBTIQ means lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, intersex and queer.

While a widely shared consensus in social sciences exists that the construction of 'our people' mainly works through 'othering' we want to add nuance to this general finding. Our article analyses right-wing populist discourse in the Austrian parliament and in public debates. Our case study focuses on Austria, as the country is one of the 'laboratories' of European right-wing populism and more specifically on the Freedom Party Austria (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ). By analysing parliamentary and public statements of FPÖ representatives we aim to elaborate how the main right-wing Austrian actor uses parliament as well as public media as a stage to construct its main addressees, 'the people'. These constructions form the basis of understandings of democracy and its limits and are therefore decisive for democratic quality as defined in the editorial to this special section. At the conclusion of our article, we will return to the notion of democratic quality and spell out some of the implications right-wing populism bears for the use and acceptance of discriminatory and stereotyping strategies.

First, we argue that the shifting notion of 'the people' used in right-wing populist text and talk differs from liberal notions of the *demos* as the democratic sovereign, a political entity of citizens. Second, we want to show that, other than the 'old' rights' purely nativist notion of the people, the new populist right aims at implementing a different however ambivalent notion of 'the people' and thus of citizenship. In this notion, ethnicity and biological descent are one of the most important but not the only criteria for belonging. In order to address several audiences at once and change the 'map of the game' right-wing populists follow a strategy, which Ruth Wodak and Jakob Engel called "calculated ambivalence" (Engel and Wodak 2013). This strategy allows them to shift meanings of 'the people' if necessary (Mayer, Ajanovic and Sauer 2014) but nevertheless feeds into exclusive constructions of citizenship and democracy.

We argue that right-wing populism does not only capitalize on the inherent tensions between democratic and liberal principles embedded in liberal democracies (Krastev 2007). Its invocation of homogeneous, ethnically bound communities – instead of societies marked by conflict – in conjunction with the relation of identity rather than representation that it constructs between the right-wing populist leader and his/her addressees represents a challenge to the very idea of democracy, i.e. of people's sovereignty.

Our argument proceeds as follows: First, we give a brief introduction into the Austrian parliamentary situation in order to situate our country study in the European field. Second, we discuss the theoretical background to our argument and present methodological information on our empirical research. Third, we turn to the results of our Critical Frame Analysis of documents from the Austrian parliamentary and public debates, which show that 'the people' right-wing populism claims to represent, emerge from this discourse as an ethnicized and at the

same time gendered entity. Finally, we draw conclusions from our empirical findings that we believe to be relevant for the development of right-wing populism within but also beyond the specific national context.

2. Context: Austria as a laboratory of European right-wing populism and extremism

The FPÖ is one of five parties currently represented in the Austrian parliament.³ In the latest elections in autumn 2017 the party won third place with less than one percent difference to the *Social Democratic Party* (SPÖ), while the conservative *People's Party* (ÖVP) gained a major victory following a campaign fitted exclusively to their new and relatively young leader, who in many respects used recipes formerly specific to right-wing populist leaders. The FPÖ's origins lie in the political organization of former National Socialists and a few right-wing liberals in the 1950s. Until the mid-1980s the FPÖ played a minor role in Austrian politics with election results oscillating between 5% and 6% in national elections during the 1970s and 1980s. From the 1980s the FPÖ experienced massive gains in share of the vote, with about 30% today.

Over the course of the 1990s the Austrian political landscape changed fundamentally. Since 1945 Austria had been characterized by neo-corporatist, consensus-oriented politics, dominated by two major parties, the *Social Democratic party* SPÖ (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs*) and the *Austrian People's Party* ÖVP (*Österreichische Volkspartei*). Under Haider's leadership the FPÖ increasingly started campaigning against this neo-corporatist system that had excluded the party – thereby presenting itself as a courageous outcast taking on the political elite. In the early 1990s it complemented its turn to right-wing populist strategies by exchanging its German nationalism for Austrian patriotism.⁴ In 1992 the FPÖ initiated the popular petition 'Austria first', which was directed against the (reputedly too liberal) migration policies of the government. The slogan 'Austria first'

3. Since elections in autumn 2017 of the 183 Members of Parliament 62 belong to the conservative *Österreichische Volkspartei* (*People's Party, ÖVP*), 52 to the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreich* (*Social Democratic Party, SPÖ*), 51 to the FPÖ, 10 to the liberal NEOS, and 8 MPs to the *Liste Pilz*, a split-off of the *Green Party* named after its founder Peter Pilz.

4. Right-wing extremism in Austria used to define Austrians as part of the German people – e.g. Jörg Haider himself talked about the “ideological monstrosity [Missgeburt] of the Austrian nation” in 1988. Of course, the party's renouncement of German nationalism in its outward communication did not necessarily affect the political positions of its members and functionaries, who until today come from elitist German nationalist student fraternities.

as well as the denunciation of immigration as the reason for all political grievances have since become trademarks of the party. Developments of the last two decades – most notably the shift to specifically anti-Muslim instead of broader anti-immigration positions – notwithstanding right-wing populist strategies of the FPÖ can therefore be traced back as far as the early 1990s, which makes the party a forerunner in the populist modernisation of right-wing extremism in Europe.

In 2000 FPÖ and ÖVP formed a coalition government that initiated turbulent times for the Freedom Party resulting in heavy losses in snap elections in 2002 – the party's share dropped from nearly 27% to 10%. In 2005 Jörg Haider broke with the FPÖ and created the *Bündnis Zukunft Österreich* (Alliance Future Austria, BZÖ) that took the FPÖ's seats in government as well as many of the party's parliamentary representatives. The new party quickly lost influence after the elections of 2006 bringing back a coalition of *Social Democrats and People's Party* and after Haider's death in 2010 the BZÖ rapidly lost significance on the national stage. The FPÖ under the new leadership of Heinz-Christian Strache however continued the right-wing populist course that had been so successful in the 1990s and again multiplied the party's share of votes.

For more than two and a half decades the FPÖ's success has deeply shaped Austrian politics – not only because of the party's demands and activities but also because of its effects on public discourse as well as on the strategies of its political opponents. FPÖ has also influenced the European political landscape in a number of ways. First, in hindsight, the FPÖ's inclusion into government in 2000 can be seen as a big step towards the normalization of right-wing populism in Europe. In 2000 the (then) other EU-member states reacted with a number of 'measures' against the Austrian right-wing government. These turned into 'sanctions' fuelling a national closing of ranks and the de-legitimation of political opposition and – if anything – bolstering a government that quickly tumbled from one home-made scandal to the next. The failure of these measures prevented any strong European reactions to right-wing populists coming to power in other countries in subsequent years, e.g. in Hungary. Second, the FPÖ has long been an ally as well as a role model for right-wing populists and right-wing extremists from different countries engaging in informal as well as formal networking activities. Albeit the nationalism embedded in right-wing politics complicates European and international cooperation, right-wing alliances have become more palpable in recent years including the founding of the faction 'Europe of Nations and Freedom' (ENF/ENL) in the European parliament in 2015. Although the fraction is led by Marine Le Pen from the French *Front National* (FN), it seems to have been a joint effort of FN, FPÖ and Belgian *Vlaams Belang* (VB) to create another right-wing European party group after their former parliamentary faction 'Identity, Tradition, Sovereignty' failed in 2007. This intense formal as well as informal networking might explain

the common ground in right-wing populist discourse all over Europe, which previous research has established (Ranieri 2016).

3. Theoretical background, material and method: Analysing strategic framing

Our analysis is theoretically based on concepts of democracy, the *demos* and citizenship as the right-wing populist interpellation of ‘the people’ aims at shifting the meaning of democracy, defining ‘the people’ in ways that depart from liberal conceptions of citizenship. Liberal European democracies are exclusive, grounded on the idea of a sovereign (nation) state with exclusive (political) citizenship rights. The right to vote is restricted to citizens; non-citizens on the other hand are disenfranchised and EU citizens have the right to vote only on the municipal level. Austria is characterised by an ethno-cultural citizenship regime, which is based on descent (*ius sanguinis*) rather than on consent to common values such as in the French civic-assimilationist model, based on *ius solis* (Rosenberger and Sauer 2011). Especially in recent times of rising migration within the European Union but also from third countries, the exclusive political citizenship concept of liberal democracies became an urgent question of democratic theory (Arrighi and Bauböck 2017). The construction of the *demos* based on national citizenship is criticized for disenfranchising a large proportion of people living in the respective countries.

Despite the fact that liberal democracies per se are exclusive, European representative democracies after World War II established a *political* notion of the *demos*: The democratic sovereign is characterized by citizenship rights and is represented by elected representatives. The liberal notion of the *demos* is seen as universalistic, at the same time ignoring (power) differences within the members of the *demos* as for instance gender or class inequalities, which lead to underrepresentation of disadvantaged groups. In opposition to this liberal idea of the *demos* the *ethnos* is an ethnically or biologically defined group. The nativist, ethnically defined group of people does not create a community of rights marked by different interests but a community of biological bonds and in an assimilationist or exclusive way of shared values. In this discourse citizenship is re-defined. It is no longer based on rights but on forms and practices of belonging, be it on the grounds of values or bodily practices as in headscarf debates (Sauer 2016). Thus, citizenship has become an “achievement” (Pulnix and Van Avermaet 2015). The notion of ‘citizenship beyond rights’ refers to this idea of belonging as achievement. Moreover, the *ethnos* cannot be represented through political institutions as its image is one of a unity of values as well as political interests hence democracy is constructed as

identity of 'the people' and the political leader. This construction seems to render the decision-making institutions of liberal democracies, especially parliaments, meaningless. To the contrary, the *ethnos* receives a political meaning and identity only through leadership.

Gender has historically been an important marker for constructing belonging, citizenship and non-belonging (Yuval-Davis 2007). For right-wing populism ethnicization and racism play a key role in delineating 'the people' from 'others', a strategy, which relies on the gendering of these 'others' as well as of 'the people' (Mayer, Sauer and Ajanovic 2014). In contrast to class differences gender is set as a (naturalized and hierarchically structured) difference *within* 'the people' in right-wing populist discourse, but it also plays an important role in marking the borders to 'others'. Our analysis therefore pays specific attention to these intersections, which mark the borders of the 'we' established in right-wing populist discourse. The concept "intersectionality from above" (Sauer 2013) allows us to understand this strategic interplay of differences.

The Austrian case study comprises of an analysis of parliamentary speeches by FPÖ representatives and of text and talk published online by the FPÖ as well as interviews with representatives of the party conducted within three research projects since 2013.⁵ We include online media in our analysis as for right-wing populists the Internet is an easily accessible sphere and thus the main and most important arena for constructing 'we', 'the people'. Right-wing populist parties – following a general strategy of distancing themselves from elite parties, the establishment and mainstream media – rather early began to use online media to spread their messages (Sauer and Pingaud 2016). In order to communicate their own messages directly to its addressees, online media and especially social media platforms became right-wing populists' most important stage (Kuhar and Ajanovic 2018).

Our study is based on the analysis of 30 online-texts, five parliamentary speeches and eight interviews with representatives of the FPÖ and its youth organisation RFJ (*Ring Freiheitlicher Jugend*, Youth Freedom Circle). We used Critical Frame Analysis (Verloo 2005) to identify patterns of meaning-making embedded in the construction of political problems and the solutions implied that can be traced across the different utterances. Our focus was on the 'strategic framing' of FPÖ representatives, i.e. the "conscious and intentional selection of language and concepts to influence political debate and decision-making" (Bacchi 2009). The analysis unearthed three major strategic frames, which we will present in the following section.

5. These were two EU-funded projects on right-wing populism (RAGE – JUST/2012/FRAC/AG/2861 and e-EAV – JUST/2011/DAP/AG/3195, both 2013/2014) as well as a research project on 'anti-Genderism' starting in 2015, funded by the City of Vienna and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

4. 'The people' in three discursive dimensions. Results

In this section we discuss how 'we', 'the people' is currently constructed in right-wing populist discourse. In order to highlight these constructions we discuss three major frames, which build important dimensions of right-wing populist discourse: the dimension of values – i.e. the explicit demarcation of 'others' as inferior with regards to 'our' values and standards; the dimension of common sense – i.e. of seemingly self-evident antagonisms between 'us' and 'them'; and the dimension of policies, which incorporates both logics and transforms them into political demands and decision-making. The double antagonism, which is a defining feature of right-wing populism and positions 'the people' simultaneously against 'the elite' and against 'others', marks all three dimensions. So does intersectionality, which we foreground as a means to understand ambiguities and shifting logics that further characterise right-wing populist discourses. In the following we will present examples from our analyses and conclude by discussing implications for right-wing populist understandings of 'the people' with regard to the concept of 'citizenship'.

4.1 Values: One set for 'us' and one for 'others'?

The first frame we want to highlight are discourses on 'values', in which 'others' together with the elites which reputedly support them are explicitly constructed as inferior to the 'we'-group of 'the people'. This construction of a hierarchy between 'us' and 'them' appears explicitly on the textual surface. When applying the analytical lens of intersectionality, however, the contradictions embedded in right-wing populist discourses become visible. In the following we want to point out this ambivalent use of 'our' values with regards to right-wing populist stances on gender equality and LGBTIQ-politics at their intersections with anti-Muslim racism.

A topic that gained prominence in recent years in right-wing populism as well as political and religious conservatism across Europe is the so-called critique of the 'gender ideology' or 'gender theory'. It is especially the elites that follow, spread and impose this ideology according to right-wing discourse. Throughout European right-wing extremism (Mayer and Sauer 2017; Paternotte and Kuhar 2017) 'gender ideology' is perceived as striving for the abolishing of the sexes and promoting gender as something to be freely chosen by individuals on a daily basis. It is constructed as destroying the complementarity of men and women and therefore 'healthy', 'natural', i.e. heterosexual families. This in turn endangers society as a whole, the nation state and 'the people'. The discourse on 'gender ideology' aims at de-legitimizing *any* form of gender equality policies as well as measures countering homophobia and envisioning equality for LGBTIQ-people. Probably

the most prominent examples were the massive demonstrations 'Manif pour tous' held in France against the 'marriage for all' in 2013, which quickly became an important platform for right-wing populists.

In contrast to the picture of decay embodied by gender equality and equal rights for LGBTIQ-people right-wing populists construct a seemingly self-evident 'natural' state of sexual and gender relations between 'natural' men and women, who form 'natural' families. In these discourses being 'natural' in itself renders the (power-)relations that are at stake in equality policies invisible and underpins seemingly self-evident family values such as love, trust and a supportive environment for kids. The contrast to the destructive (non-)values ascribed to 'gender ideology' – e.g. uninhibited egoism instead of motherly care-taking, sexual pleasure seeking instead of love – could hardly be more pronounced. Analysing the construction of 'others' in these discourses in Austria shows that these 'others' are defined by the values they (allegedly) hold – i.e. by their advocacy of equality – rather than by demographic characteristics. It is for example not 'women' that are excluded from the right-wing populist 'we', but feminists, who are constructed as antagonists of 'real women'.

One example of this strategy is the following quote from a resolution proposal, which representatives of the FPÖ brought into parliament on 8 March 2016:

The biggest loser in this game is the normal heterosexual woman, i.e. the majority of women. [...] The mother, who still raises her children herself. The women with two kids working part-time, who will get hardly any pension. The single-mother, who is struggling along and will end in the same poverty as the married woman with four children. The vast majority of women do not gain anything from all the fuss which is allegedly made to emancipate women through gender mainstreaming. (Schimanek et al. 2016)

Against this "vast majority" of women – or more to the point: of mothers – the "particular interests" of "a minimal percentage of militant language feminists" are discursively positioned, who appear to be the only ones gaining from gender equality policies. It seems noteworthy that the parliamentary resolution proposal cited above explicitly includes single-mothers into the "vast majority" of "normal heterosexual woman", as other texts we analysed problematized single-parents alongside same-sex couples as deviant from the norm of 'healthy' families (e.g. Krauss 2013).

As the example shows the right-wing populist idea of an 'ideology'-driven elite is especially pronounced in the case of 'gender ideology', which finds its most important articulation in the political strategy of gender mainstreaming. With regard to the construction of 'us', 'the people' criticism of 'gender ideology' can be analysed as one important means of defining 'others' through their (political)

values and political aims. LGBTIQ-people, feminists and the 'elite', who supposedly support these allegedly deviant groups, are thereby excluded. The example also shows that the notion of 'the people' is gendered, hence gender – in contrast to other social characteristics most prominently class – is acknowledged as an important natural difference by right-wingers.

At the same time as a traditional hierarchical gender order is defended the argument most often brought forward against Muslim, immigrant or refugee 'others' are 'our liberal gender equality values', which these 'others' reputedly do not respect. The FPÖ has a strong position not only on 'our' equal gender relations, which as illustrated above are naturalised as part of the discourse on 'healthy' and 'normal' families, but also on those of 'others':

Every religious community active in Austria has to accept that in Austria women and men have equal rights. [...] Forced marriages, forced genital cutting and the oppression of and violence against women are not covered by religious freedom [...] The right to self-determination of women has to be accepted by all cultural groups living here. (FPÖ-Bildungsinstitut 2013, 51)

This statement appears to be contradictory to the 'gender values' governing the 'gender-ideology' discourse. While the statement quoted above equates women with mothers, thereby defining the 'normal woman' in rather restrictive terms, the latter uses a frame of 'self-determination' as its point of reference. But the issue that is at stake in this case, is neither gender equality nor women's right to self-determination, but the construction of 'us' and 'them' through the "ethnicization of sexism" (Jäger 1999). Projecting sexism, gender inequality and homophobia on 'others' serves the purpose of constructing 'us' as enlightened (Bischof et al. 2010). In turn this ascription of (non-)values of inequality and discrimination to 'others' prepares the ground for the rejection of domestic and European gender equality policies. If gender equality and emancipation are values already embedded in 'our culture', they cease to be political aims that demand programmes and measures to be taken.

While in some cases values are made explicit in right-wing populist text and talk, more often than not these discourses rest on tacit assumptions about the 'nature' of the social world. These assumptions are characterised by their antagonistic structure, i.e. by the idea that competition for a fixed amount of resources between 'us' and 'them' is at the basis of all politics. In the following section we try to bring some of these assumptions to the front.

4.2 'Common sense': Othering and exclusion as self-evident

The projection of gender inequality and sexism on 'others' does not necessarily rest on explicit arguments about 'their' values (or: non-values), but can just as well

be treated as a common sense-'truth' and as a basis for political discourse, which in itself is not open to debate. This discursive logic can take many different forms, two of which we want to exemplify in the following. We will show that – albeit less explicit than in the 'value-discourse' – the 'we' is constructed through a threat that 'others' embody. This construction of 'us' through a shared existential danger rests on the link of the two antagonists right-wing populist discourses construct: 'Others,' who are 'our' antagonists by default, and an 'elite' that does not understand the everyday needs, the everyday thoughts and fears of 'the people' and – even worse – has abandoned 'us' in favour of these 'others'. Today these 'others' in the Austrian case study but also throughout the European right-wing populist discourse are mainly Muslims – be it Turkish immigrants to Austria, refugees or Islamist terrorists outside the country.

This discursive logic can be found in public debates on sexualized violence against women after the attacks in Cologne on New Year's Eve 2015/2016. One of the FPÖ's representatives in the Federal Council, the upper house of the Austrian Parliament, Hans-Jörg Jenewein, said in a speech in front of the assembly:

Mr. Chancellor what have you done about that until now? – You are the head of government and for half a year now you leave this country to asylum demanders, asylum fraudsters! Media coverage – in all newspapers without exception, this cannot be limited to boulevard papers or quality papers – in all newspapers is talking about assaults, about excesses of violence, about sexual assaults every day. One sometimes gets the impression that a part of these people, who come into the country are sex tourists with fake passports. Mr. Chancellor, someone who tows hundreds of thousands of people through Austria without control, without any kind of safeguard, should not wonder if criminality and terror find their way into Europe. (Jenewein 2016)⁶

The FPÖ's representative directly accuses the Austrian Chancellor from the SPÖ of facilitating the entry of undocumented migrants into Austria at the expense of the Austrian population. Simultaneously, he paints asylum-seekers as violent and criminal without giving any explanation why asylum seekers should be especially prone to violence. Violent behaviour and sexual assault rather appear to be an inevitable outcome of their presence in the country. This framing again points to the gendered nature of right-wing populist discourse, in which asylum-seekers appear to be exclusively male while the victimisation of the Austrian population is underpinned by the image of the female victim of male violence. The following

6. In the German original the use of specific terms is striking. One is 'Asylforderer'; different from the normally used term 'Asylwerber' (i.e. 'asylum seekers') 'Asylforderer' implies an inappropriate claim for asylum by refugees. The second is 'schleppen', which is a colloquial term mostly designating the activity of facilitating border crossings or of human trafficking.

example shows that this discourse does not necessarily depend on the depiction of ‘others’ as physically dangerous but on the presupposition of an antagonistic relation between ‘us’ and ‘them’.

In 2010 the head of the FPÖ, Heinz-Christian Strache, published a posting on his very popular Facebook profile entitled “Our families have to bleed – the money goes abroad!” (Strache 2010)⁷ The short text is a demand to end the transfer of family benefits to people working in Austria whose children live abroad, with Turkey taken as the prime example. Since in the 1990s Austria cancelled bilateral agreements, which entitled non-EU citizens to claim such benefits for their children at home under certain conditions, the content of the posting is – at best – misleading. But for our analysis another aspect is more revealing: After a demand for policy change the text ends with the following claim: “We need the money for *our* children, for *our* families“ (ibid.).

Recalling the emphasis the FPÖ put on traditional families (including traditional gender roles), this quote shows the limits an ethnicized nativism imposes on these values. Again the antagonism between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is not explained in any way, but is the presupposition on which the narrative depends. However, in contrast to the example given above, the ‘others’ implied are neither criminal nor do they act in a harmful way. They are (wrongly) ascribed social rights and therefore their existence already poses a threat, because social policies are conceived of as the distribution of limited resources – whatever is given to ‘them’ has to be taken from ‘us’. Rendering this type of ethnicized antagonism self-evident, as quasi-natural and as a basic assumption ingrained in common sense is one of the most successful strategies of right-wing populism as this common sense perception is often taken for granted in political debates by all actors involved. It disposes of the need of overt racist discourses, while allowing interpretation of all policy questions through the lens of ethnicized nativism, thereby providing an endless reservoir of anti-elite arguments. In contrast to the reckless elites, the FPÖ builds its self-image of a party not only listening to, knowing and representing ‘the people’, but being part of ‘the people’ to the extent of being indistinguishable from ‘the people’ – as in the example above, where it is ‘*our* children’ and ‘*our* families’ we have to care about and not e.g. ‘Austrian children’ or ‘your children’, which would be a more common phrasing for a politician addressing an audience. The contrast

7. With more than 580.000 followers (on 30 May 2017) Strache was by far the most prominent Austrian politician on this social network. In comparison the former social-democratic Austrian Chancellor Christian Kern had about 180.000 followers at that time. In February 2018 Chancellor Sebastian Kurz from the conservative *People’s Party*, ÖVP, who has come to be assigned the role of the young challenger in the last election, has nearly reached Strache in terms of followers on his Facebook-page, both range above 740.000.

constructed between the distant political elites and the right-wing populist leader could hardly be more pronounced and it signifies not only a means of gathering public support, but a different conception of the politics, which stipulates political representation in favour of an assumed identity between right-wing populists and their addressees. This mode of identification works both ways: On the one hand it renders the right-wing populist leader a mouth-piece of 'the people' – he/she seemingly has no agenda but to serve 'us' to the full extent of his/her specific qualities, which make him/her a default leader. On the other hand this identification can also delineate the borders of 'the people' as any fundamental opposition to the claims and demands of the right-wing populist leader can be constructed as an attack on 'the people' rather than disagreement with a political position. This mode of understanding politics thereby leads to the de-legitimization of political critique and makes political debate and democratic deliberation impossible. In conjunction with the right-wing populist call for direct democracy that is used to question the decision-making power of the institutions of representative democracies, politics in the mode of identity target the institutional core as well as core values of liberal democracies.

In the following section we want to give examples, of how FPÖ's discursive strategies play out in the realm of policies, i.e. how gendered and ethnicized 'others' as well as a distant elite are constructed in order to legitimize certain policy proposals.

4.3 Policy-proposals: Consequences of 'othering' and exclusion

Parliamentary talk is essentially about policy-making. The following analysis shows how 'othering' and exclusion through right-wing populist rhetoric become enshrined in policy-proposals that might in effect foster the fragmentation of society along ethnicized and gendered lines. Again, the anti-elite stance taken by FPÖ representatives is obvious in their criticism of current government policies: "This federal government doesn't do that! [...] That is the reason [...] for the high number of asylum abuse in Austria, for which the taxpayers now have to pay. (Applause from the FPÖ) You save on the pensioners, you save in all areas but you are not ready to end asylum abuse, because today there is an asylum industry – NGOs – an asylum industry that lives on this asylum abuse and has no interest in ending this asylum abuse. These are truths!" (Strache 2012, 166). The statement includes both antagonists: the elite that has forsaken 'us', 'the people', and asylum seekers, who are constructed as abusing the Austrian system. Austrian right-wing populists construct budget policies in a simplified manner, in which money spent on 'them' is necessary lacking in other areas, where 'we' might profit from it.

In parliamentary debates on Muslim headscarves and on the so-called burka the FPÖ took an opportunity to present a list of demands for new laws, one of them concerning a complete ban of face-coverage in public space as well as a ban of headscarves in public offices, schools and universities. Rhetorically this demand is backed by reference to women's emancipation as the following quotes show.⁸ First, the FPÖ representative states that for him "the burka is a symbol of women's oppression as is the headscarf" (Stefan et al. 2017). It follows that a ban of Muslim headscarves serves the "protection of Austrian culture" as well as the "liberation of those girls, who are forced to wear a headscarf by their archaic cultures" (ibid.). We see several antagonisms at play here: First, with regards to the context of the statement the FPÖ positions itself as antagonists of a government unwilling or unable to act responsibly. Second, different sets of values are invoked – on the one hand 'our' Austrian culture that seems to be threatened by Muslims and a piece of clothing and on the other hand 'their' 'archaic culture', which is not only a threat to us but also to these girls, as it reputedly hinders their self-determination. In this case, the dimension of gender is juxtaposed on the construction of an ethnicized 'other', who becomes divided into young female victims of 'their' culture and – albeit unnamed – perpetrators. For the analysis of the FPÖ's stance on the matter yet another line of the quoted text merits attention: "In his/her spare time, everyone is at liberty to do as he/she pleases." (Stefan et al. 2017) So, one could conclude, the girls being 'saved' from 'their' culture in schools are free to be oppressed again in their spare time as long as 'Austrian' culture is being saved from the 'attack' of headscarves being worn at schools or universities. The idea of women's emancipation in this case serves to deepen the antagonism between 'our' gender-equal society and culture and 'their' oppressive one.

5. Conclusions

The three major frames of Austrian right-wing debates demonstrate that constructions of 'the people' are rarely defined by references to the 'in-group', but mostly emerge as an anti-thesis to corrupt and distant elites and to 'others' that are deemed to threaten 'us' in all dimensions of life. Both antagonists interfere in the conduct of 'our' everyday lives, mock the values that guide 'us' and are responsible for and/or profit from policies that harm 'us'. Ethnicization remains the dominant

8. Secularism, which is at the forefront of similar debates e.g. in France is less of an issue in Austria, where the Catholic Church has a strong influence on education and each classroom features a cross at the wall, which is highly valued by conservative as well as right-wing parties and movements.

way of constructing the 'we'-group in Austrian right-wing populist discourse, although today's *ethnos* is based on the naturalisation of culture rather than biology as historic fascism would have it. More often than not processes of 'othering' are not even explicit in right-wing populist discourse but rest on a common sense understanding of antagonistic relations between 'us' and 'them'. These ethnically defined exclusive understanding of 'the people' is further marked by gendered differences within the 'we' group as – in contrast to class differences – gender becomes a naturalised factor upon which a 'normal' (i.e. hierarchical) gender order and 'natural' (hetero-)sexuality are built. Transgression of these 'natural' orders threatens the alleged homogeneity of 'the people' and therefore necessarily leads to the exclusion of the transgressor. The analytical concept of 'intersectionality from above' allowed us to analyse the strategic use of gender and ethnicity in 'othering'-processes.

'The people' that emerges at these intersections of ethnicized and gendered boundaries differs markedly from liberal construction of the *demos* defined by citizenship. Albeit liberal conceptions of citizenship are themselves exclusive and structured by (gendered, ethnicized, classed) power differences, these rights-based definitions form the basis of liberal democracies, which are marked by a plurality of political interests that seek representation. Right-wing populism replaces this pluralism with the (assumed) homogeneity of a 'natural' community that only becomes a political entity when it is identified with a political leader. The relationship between right-wing populists and 'their' people therefore is not defined by political representation but by identity – the leader identifies with the needs and grievances of 'his' or 'her' people rather than promoting a political programme. The right-wing strategy of creating 'the people' de-legitimizes citizenship as a rights-based institution. This naturalisation of the *demos* also works to de-legitimize democratic conflict (as defined in the editorial following Rancière). The naturalisation of 'the people' and their needs renders any challenge and attack on a normative natural order rather than disagreement within the bounds of the 'sayable'.

This leads us back to the challenge right-wing populism poses for liberal democracies in Europe and beyond. In gathering majorities for the political project of a homogeneous community with borders defined by antagonistic relations to 'others' and inner structures resting on 'natural' hierarchies, right-wing populism buries the idea of pluralistic societies which reign in different interests through the mechanisms of liberal democracy. While the latter – their exclusionary mechanisms for the granting of and exclusion from citizenship notwithstanding – hold a possibility for further democratization, right-wing populists' exclusionary antagonistic vision does not.

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