

Thinking Transnational Backlash Movements against Women's & LGBT Rights and Academic Freedom

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Panel Abstract:

In the last 20 years, LGBT rights and activism have expanded into mainstream domestic and international politics. Queer studies from Anglophone countries, for example criticism against 'homonationalism', have cautiously focused on analysing connections between global liberalism and 'progress' of LGBT rights. The promotion of LGBT rights has sometimes been mobilised to justify racist or xenophobic state violence. In the last few years, however, transnational backlash discourses against women's and LGBT rights and attacks on academic freedom of gender and sexuality studies have become more visible due to growing political influence of far-right populist movements/governments. This panel will explore what is actually happening in local contexts with the backlash against feminism, LGBT rights, and academic freedom of Gender and Sexuality Studies, and explores how we can cooperate and build a transnational researchers/activists' network against these movements.

Panel 1

Chair: Stefanie Mayer

Discussants: Kazyoshi Kawasaka, Judith Goetz

Gender and Sexuality á la Alternative für Deutschland (AfD): Counter-cultural backlash against progressive values and social uncertainty

Christopher Finke (Justus-Liebig-University Gießen)

After a mere five years of political activity, the right-wing populist and at least partly extremist AfD, in autumn of 2018, is peaking in electoral success. The European Refugee situation and the German approach to it undoubtedly play a significant role in explaining the party's strength.

Some AfD-politicians are however also described as uneasy with modernity and social complexity, while some voters are described to be wanting a straightforward life (Amann 2017). The AfD rejectingly engages with the academic discipline of gender studies, with political correctness, as well as love- and lifestyles and sexual orientations alternative to a traditional, heteronormative family concept and role understandings. Paradoxically, the Alternative Homosexuelle platform was recently founded form within the AfD. Thus it may be assumed that not conservative rejection of LGBT* is at the heart of AfD's engagement, but unease with and rejection of societal complexity.

This contribution thus seeks to reconstruct the AfD's stance on (non-binary) gender conceptions and (non-heteronormative) sexualities. It is argued that the successive abandonment and non-representation of traditional values by conservative political actors, notably Merkel's CDU, due to social progress instilled by the 68-movement, led to homelessness of identity and social uncertainty among many people, which the AfD now seeks to represent.

Especially with a slightly pronounced belief in the conspiracy theory of an American eradication of German conservatism through the 68-movement among right-wing voters (Salzborn 2016), the bolstering of ‘the traditional family’ and a denouncement of LGBT*- and gender-sensitive language by the AfD appears to serve as an agent in pursuit of a counter-cultural backlash (Kellershohn and Kastrup 2016), for an increasingly uncertain political principal in socially complex times.

LGBTIQ* Rights contested again: Backlash in Europe

Niklas Ferch MA and Prof. Dr. Dorothee de Nève (Justus-Liebig-Universität Gießen)

Over the past three decades, new legal standards strengthening the rights of LGBTIQ* were established in various European countries. These rights comprise the establishment of anti-discrimination standards, reforms of pension systems and social laws, legalization of non-heterosexual relationships, registered partnerships, marriage for all, and the adoption right for non-heterosexual couples (Helfer & Voeten 2014; Mos 2013; Siegel & Wang 2018). These legal changes enjoyed the support of the majority of the citizens in these countries (Brewer 2014), while attitudes towards LGBTIQ* have changed significantly for the better (Smith, Son & Kim 2014).

These achievements were celebrated as milestones by the LGBTIQ* community. Despite these developments, LGBTIQ* persons still experience discrimination (FRA 2014) and in all European countries opposition to the liberalization of LGBTIQ* rights always has existed. Recently, however, new actors arise on the surface in most European countries and try to reverse the progress already made in terms of LGBTIQ* rights. On the supply side, right-wing populist and right-wing extremist parties present themselves as the last remaining bulwarks of the traditional, heteronormative male-breadwinner family. These parties try to frame the debates on gender equality, women’s rights and LGBTIQ* rights in an explicitly exclusionary way (Meret & Siim 2013, Meret 2018; Lodenius 2018; Siri & Myatt 2018), which is heuristically captured by concepts such as „Homonalism“ (Puar 2007) or „Femonalism“ (Farris 2017). On the demand side, explorative studies on LGBTIQ* election behaviour show that the narratives offered by these parties also appeal to voters who identify as LGBTIQ* themselves (de Nève & Ferch 2018; de Nève et al. 2018).

Against this backdrop, it is the aim of our paper to firstly systematically examine the agenda of these backwards-looking actors and, secondly, to systematically compare their strategies. Based on these results, we will develop ideas on how to counteract this backlash.

"LGBT booms" in pre-Olympic Japan: Ongoing intersections of backlash discourses

Claire Maree (University of Melbourne)

At the global level, use of the term ‘LGBT civil society’ in key reports and documents appears to represent a shift in global human rights discourse and civil society organization around the legal social and cultural barriers experienced by peoples of diverse sexualities and gender identities. Civil society can at once be a site in which counter-heteronormative discourse may be voiced, yet at the same time an arena in which some issues are included to the exclusion of other issues. This is evident in the so-called the Asian region where activism, networking and community building around sexual orientation and gender identity related rights and issues has a long history at the local, national and transnational level (Huang 2011; Engebretsen and

Schroeder 2015; Mackie and McLelland 2015). Josephine Ho's (2015) critique of global governance in relation to conservative Christian groups campaigns against sex-positive advocacy in Taiwan has shown that one possible downside of the increased activity of NGOs is the weakening of connections amidst a proliferation of groups. This highlights the ongoing challenges of advocating for LGBT/I and SOGI rights. This paper takes up this issue in the context of the emerging civil rights discourse within Japan, and the accompanying backlash. I specifically deal with the current political climate in Tokyo, and discourse surrounding the Tokyo metropolitan government's anti-hate speech and anti-LGBT discrimination ordinance. The application of global norms to facilitate obligations in the staging of a global mega-event such as the Olympics reinstates a 'traditional' interpretation of SOGI issues that calls for resistance to "queer" bodies/sensibilities by marking them as being in excess, and therefore dangerous to, the "traditional" family.

**From Backlash to "LGBT" movement and beyond:
The moral conservatives and feminist/queer left politics in Japan**

Name: SHIMIZU, Akiko (University of Tokyo)

Proposal:

In 2018, two major but seemingly conflicting political moves regarding LGBT issues happened in Japan: on one hand, there was a homophobic and highly controversial comment by an LDP lawmaker and the ruling party's refusal to officially denounce the comment in the face of a public outcry and protest; on the other hand, the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly passed the first ordinance bill stipulating the prohibition of discrimination based on SOGI. Although it may appear at first sight that Metropolitan Citizens First Association, the ruling party of the Metropolitan Assembly, takes a more "liberal" or "progressive" approach to the issues of LGBT rights, while the national government and LDP remain more morally conservative, in fact they share the same political goal—keeping up the appearance of "LGBT-friendly" Tokyo/Japan for the coming Tokyo 2020 Olympic/Paralympic games without effecting any fundamental change to the heteronormative family system that Japanese moral conservatives have guarded zealously. This presentation investigates how the seemingly contradicting moves by the national and municipal governments have worked in tandem to achieve this shared goal and how their coordination has been effectively narrowing the left discursive/political space, making it more and more difficult for activists and other human rights advocates to frame LGBT issues as part of the wider intersection of human rights issues. It argues that this same pattern of narrowing the left discursive field of gender/sexual politics can be seen in the late 90's and early naughties Japan, when the backlash against feminism and women's movements inflicted a severe blow to the emerging gay rights movements, and that it is the same actors that are now working to ensure the new "LGBT" movements will not threaten the family system and values the moral conservatives have held as the foundation of the nation.

Panel 2

Chair: Kazuyoshi Kawasaki

Discussants: Dorothee de Nève, Akiko Shimizu

Australia: Beating Back the Backlash

Graham Willett (University of Melbourne)

In the almost 50 years since the gay movement was launched in Australia in 1969-1970, there has been almost uninterrupted progress towards the goal of equality – and for ever-more groups of people: most recently bisexual, trans and intersex people. But if the progress has been steady, it has not been uncontested. Rather, opposition forces – Christians and conservatives mostly – have launched a series of assaults on the progress of the movement. In the late 1970s a movement inspired by the rise of the Christian Right in America and Britain aimed to emulate their efforts. For a while it looked as though they might succeed – police forces, especially, launched a wave of attacks against the newly visible gay social life. When AIDS arrived in Australia in 1982, the Right saw this as another opportunity to mobilise. In the mid-1990s a vicious grass-roots campaign to oppose the decriminalisation of homosexual acts in the state of Tasmania was waged over several years. The same-sex marriage issue provided another chance.

But on each occasion, the attempt at a backlash failed – usually miserably. Occasionally, as in Tasmania and with marriage, the conservatives provoked such resistance that they suffered a serious defeat from which they had real trouble recovering.

Understanding this history requires an understanding of the specific nature of Australian politics and society – the country's deeply secular nature, its parliamentary system, its absence of a Bill of Rights, the strength of progressive ideas rooted in a strong centre-left party and socially conscious trade unions, the emergence of a progressive new middle class from the 1960s on. It is in the context of this opportunity structure that the social movement launched in the very late 1960s was able to continue to accumulate successes and to abort all attempts at a Backlash.

Anti-gender and anti-feminist movement in Poland

Magdalena Komisarz (Jagiellonian University)

In the years 2013-2014 there was a public debate around the gender and gender studies. The debate was very crucial for the anti-gender movement and introduced a negative connotated gender-ideology term to the mainstream. The debate was initiated by the Catholic Church in Poland and was (and still is) politically used by the Church as well as by far-right movements. As Marta Zimniak-Hałajko states, the public dispute has an impact on the ciswomen's (far-) right organizations formation's dynamic. Due to this fact, I will present shortly the the current state of research on the gender-ideology debate delivered by scholars like Dorota Szelewa, Weronika Grzebalska and Marta ZimniakHałajko.

Since 2013 the main Polish far-right organizations organize anti-feminist picket on the very symbolic day, namely 8th March. The initiative is called "In the name of ladies" ("W imieniu Dam") and is presented as an alternative to the feminist one. During the pickets, mainly ciswomen have a voice and their speeches include a number of anti-femist and anti-gender postulates and comments.

What aroused my curiosity was the participation and involvement of ciswomen in the events. I conducted a case study reserach based on the media representations of the anti-feministic picket "In the name of ladies" on 8th March 2018. In my research I investigated why ciswomen from far-right Polish movements are against gender studies and feminism and become a part of the anti-gender movement. Why is feminism not attractive for them?

**Current challenges of the Korean LGBTIQ* community:
A study on the development and counter-movements of the Queer parade**

David Radermacher (Academy of Korean Studies)

This paper will focus on the efforts of sexual minorities and the LGBTIQ+ community in South Korea's society to earn their space in society and the backlash against it. Special focus will be on the dynamics of the backlash and hatred around the "Queer Parade".

To improve this situation of the LGBTIQ+ community they have been trying to organize a "Queer Parade" to announce their existence and gain visibility in the public sphere. The Seoul Queer Parade grew exponentially and by 2018 the number of participants exceeded 100,000. In addition, the queer parade, which was held only in Seoul, recently began to be held in other major cities.

The Queer Parade is a rare event where LGBTIQ+ in Korea who has hidden their identity can communicate with each other. At the same time, this event is a place of hate and antagonism. Conservative Christian forces are using the queer parade as a strategy to compensate their losing of power and influence by creating hatred against LGBTIQ+. Opponents of the queer parade do not just throw out hate speech, but block the parade and dispossess the space itself. Starting in 2014, the police intervention minimized direct conflicts between LGBTIQ+ and the opposition, therefore the hate of conservative Christianity was often ridiculed and laughed at by LGBTIQ+.

But the queer parade in other cities, except for Seoul, where the role of the police is relatively poor, is being exposed to the direct violence of conservative forces. In the case of the 2018 Incheon Queer Parade, the opponent first took over space, blocked the parade, and the parade was delayed for several hours. During this event, LGBTIQ+ who participated in the parade were exposed to hate speech and physical violence without any protection and therefore traumatized

**With God and nature against gender:
Ideology and rhetoric of right-wing (extremist) anti-feminism in Austria**

Judith Goetz (Universität Wien) and Stefanie Mayer (Wien/Public Management)

Abstract

Anti-feminism has accompanied feminist and queer movements as well as the establishment of equality policies from the beginning. Nevertheless, opposition to feminism, to equality policies and to the concept of *gender* as such has recently gained relevance all over Europe, in some cases leading to mass-mobilizations and street protests as well as petitions and other types of political engagement against specific policies. While these anti-feminist and anti-queer positions as such are not new, they are currently leading to new alliances of actors from different political spectra. The electoral successes of right-wing extremist parties in many European countries has furthered these movements, and their positions are increasingly finding their way into government programs and policies as well as the media and public debate. In contrast to approaches that simply add anti-feminism or sexism to the list of discriminatory beliefs that characterize right-wing extremism, our paper aims to show that the naturalization/normalization of gender hierarchies as well as the construction of heterosexuality as the only 'natural' sexuality are an integral part of the ethnicized ('völkisch') communities right-wing extremists envision.

Our paper empirically analyzes current discourses and policies against feminism, (deconstructionist) gender theories and equality policies in Austria. We first provide a descriptive account of the anti-feminist construction of a 'natural' gender dualism and its associated hierarchical gender order, as well as 'natural' heterosexuality and biological reproduction. We then develop our analysis of these constructions in two ways: First, we show that they have to be understood as two core areas of right-wing extremist ideological formations. Second, our analysis clarifies that the construction of images of feminism and *gender* as symbols for social change, serves as an important link between different political actors, thereby massively enlarging the sphere of influence for right-wing extremism.

Backlash Discourses, New Conservatism and LGBT Rights Discourses in Japan

Kazuyoshi Kawasaka (Heinrich Heine University Duesseldorf)

This paper discusses how contemporary political backlash discourses against LGBT rights have ironically influenced pro-LGBT rights discourses in Japan.

In 2018, political backlash discourses against LGBT rights, triggered by the new LGBT political visibility, have started to be visualised and have provoked public controversy in Japan. In May, right-wing media and twitter accounts targeted messages on placards by participants in Tokyo Pride Parade criticising Prime Minister Abe and Japan's Emperor System. They made demands to 'de-politicise' and disconnect LGBT issues from left wing politics and their political party. In July and September, Sugita Mio, a member of the Liberal Democratic Party and PM Abe's ally, published articles in an Opinion Magazines *Shincho*⁴⁵ insisting that LGBT people were reproductively fruitless, therefore the government should not spend any taxpayer's money on them. What was notable in this controversy is that her arguments have been criticised by 'conservative' politicians and opinion leaders, while criticisms and opinions from left wing politicians and intellectuals were underrepresented publicly in Japan.

On the other hand, 20 years ago, backlash movements against gender equality, supported by major politicians such as Abe Shinzo, now the Prime minister, rose in Japan. In these backlash discourses, anti-gay/transgender views were well utilised for their political campaigns and often LGBT activisms were connected to leftist movements in the manner of conspiracy theory.

Through reviewing Japanese history of LGBT rights discourses and backlash discourses against gender equality in the last 20 years, this paper shows similarities between contemporary anti-LGBT rights discourses and anti-feminist discourses 20 years ago. It explores how the failure to counter the backlash against gender equality decades ago still defines LGBT rights discourses. Then it shows how Japanese embracement of LGBT diversity confines LGBT rights politics within conservative political domains, assimilating Japanese normativity and traditional family values.