Democracy and Demography:
Intersectional dimensions of political conflicts

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De-democratization and opposition to gender equality politics in Europe

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Abstract

Feminist theory revealed liberal democracy as gendered masculine in an intersectional way that privileges racial-ethnic and economic power, enforces heteronormativity, and constructs gender-binary citizenship. Merely reformed to accommodate women, brotherhood-breadwinner democracies now face deeper challenges. The second demographic transition undermines the hegemonic quality of binary gender relations, and organizes political conflict on an axis of reproductive politics. Germany's Green and AfD parties exemplify opposite ends of this axis. Intersectional clusters of issues now reflect ideals that de-masculinize democracy, while reactionary populism re-politicizes masculinity to defend the family-state relations of the breadwinner-brotherhood gender system.

Democracy and Demography: Intersectional dimensions of reproductive politics

Democracy is a contested term. The institutionalization of procedural democracy often went hand-in-hand with the exclusion of certain kinds of issues and constituents from access to politics (Ferree et al. 2002). There is tension between a view of democracy as institutional, representative, and achieved and a framing of democracy as participatory, discursive, and aspirational (Ferree 2013, 421). As authoritarians come to power through electoral means and then begin to dismantle the norms that hold them accountable for their actions, worries about losing the values of democracy have become global. But what is the nature of the democratic systems that are changing, how is gender implicated in this diversity of challenges?

Although “democracy” is literally the power of the people, the question still arises, “which people”? The “demos” of any democracy rests on the social construction of a people demographically reproduced over time, and thus on a politics of reproduction. The gender system that governs the politics of reproduction is both a material set of power relations and the symbolic relations that legitimate them. As Pateman (1988) argued, democratic revolutions replaced their patriarchal gender systems with symbolic equality among men as empowered citizens. The “brotherhood compact” at the heart of actually-existing liberal democracies constructed nationalist political institutions of and for men, while the gender binary “breadwinner model” embedded in liberalism’s construction of public and private “spheres” elevated earning power to central significance in masculinity. Over the past century and a half, women’s resistance has eased but not erased this institutionalized masculinity (Çınar 2019, Hoganson 1998).

Nonetheless, the brotherhood-breadwinner framework hegemonic in democratic politics in the 20th century is now questioned transnationally. Its gendered assumptions about breadwinning face broad challenges as women's education and wages rise, and quota systems present the inclusion of women as a standard for democratic representation (Tripp and Kang 2008). Resisting change, European populist masculinity politics defend the breadwinner-brotherhood version of "tradition" and its version of "the people" (Verloo and Paternotte 2018). These reactionary responses aim to blunt or even reverse the conspicuous effects of on-going shifts in systems of social reproduction (Lesthaeghe and Neidert 2009). The breadwinner-brotherhood system these masculinists defend presumes the survival of "the family" (a gender-binary, heteronormative, fictitiously private institution) is essential to the survival of "the nation" (a set of borders militarily protected by mobilized masculinity) to preserve its "demos," the people imagined as publicly empowered by the institutions of democracy (Collins 2001, Yuval-Davis 1997).

Focused on the complex ties among family, nation and demos, reproductive conflicts are by nature diverse. The gender systems that organize reproductive relations are intersectional at the macro level (Collins and Bilge 2016, Choo and Ferree 2010). The gender politics of democracy can thus not be reduced to explicit attacks on gender equality policies, the preferences of men as voters, or the performative masculinity of individual leaders (Sauer 2017, Paternotte 2020). The lived experience of demographic diversity in families and nation-states triggers ongoing changes in the gender order of institutional politics by expanding the "demos" that democracies are to serve.

Central to these experiences of changing gender relations of democratic power are demographic transitions in practices of daily life at a population level. The first demographic

transition was the suite of changes associated with industrialization and urbanization, such as declining infant mortality, increasing life expectancy, shifts from extended to nuclear families, and the decline of parentally-arranged marriages, together destabilizing classic patriarchy. The second demographic transition, observed today in diverse forms among already democratic societies, encompasses changes such as expanded cohabitation, non-marital childbearing and rearing, normalization of divorce, and higher levels of transnational relationships, including “living apart together” (Lesthaeghe 2010). This second transition, like the first, is felt at both individual and population levels and is associated with changes in political ideas and institutions.

This paper uses German politics to illustrate the intersectional politics of national reproduction, since this case offers vivid examples of how reproductive relations come to the foreground of party politics. Germany is also a battleground where democratic norms themselves are explicitly contested by the “new” left and right parties formed around social reproduction. On the one hand, its Green Party pioneered intersectional “new left” electoral coalitions around issues of gender and reproduction, advancing more partnership-based ideals for families and less hierarchical forms of democratic practice. On the other hand, its newest political party, Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), is a relative late-comer in reactionary “new right” protests against the cultural and material changes in state-family relations in Europe (Harteveld et al. 2015).

Importantly, Germany’s new right and new left share critical views of capitalism, state austerity and the dangers of globalized markets, but are nonetheless diametrically opposed on the reproductive axis, the dimension of political conflict focused on the meaning of and response to the second demographic transition. The reorganization of political struggles onto this axis

reflects the fundamental nature of the changes in the gender system that reproduces democracy as well as the demos to which each democracy specifically belongs.

The plan of this paper is first to expand on the theoretical argument about why reproduction, a gendered system, is so relevant to democracy, emphasizing that gender is neither static nor merely cultural, but a historically contested relationship of material political power with symbolic justifications (Scott 1986; Kováts 2019). The next section discusses how the second demographic transition has challenged the hegemony of the breadwinner-brotherhood model of state masculinity. As ongoing restructurings of reproductive practices, demographic changes spur realignments of state objectives, trigger material changes in family life, and shift democratic expectations among citizens. The paper then uses Germany to illustrate the declining hegemony of the breadwinner-brotherhood model and the significance of the new reproductive axis, highlighting the emergence of its Green Party in the 1980s as a pioneering translation of the “new left” generational concerns into party politics, and then looking at the recent emergence of the “new right” Alternative für Deutschland (AfD). Like many European nationalist parties, the AfD successfully uses assumptions about brotherhood and breadwinning to tap economic, xenophobic, and sexual anxieties about intersectional change and to focus them on national autonomy and economic power as emblems of state masculinity. The conclusion emphasizes generations as being an understudied intersectional relation of inequality, both carrying and contesting demographic transformations in democratic practice.

Liberal democracy and the breadwinner-brotherhood state

At the macro-level, a sex/gender system includes the specific intersectional practices of law, policy, and social legitimation by which states engage in governing gender, so that state control over reproduction generates both divisions and solidarity by gender identity, sexuality,

class, race, nation, age (Brush 2003, Walby 2009). Understanding politics as intersectional at this macro-level departs from the framework conventionally called left and right, since intersectional relations among demographic statuses like gender, age and nation are original features of how democracies constituted themselves, not later additions (Sauer 2017, Yuval Davis 1997). For example, both right and left assumed that the imagined community of a nation set legitimate limits on democratic participation and rights (Anderson, 1983, Pateman and Mills 2011).

As Carole Pateman's brilliant analysis in *The Sexual Contract* pointed out, the revolutions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries tied the "demos" that democracies were to represent to demographic assumptions about gendered relations of family life that regulated sexuality, descent and national belonging (1988). These were different from those of families formed by classic patriarchy (Adams 2005). Taking up the definition of liberalism as the protection of individual rights, freedom of self-determination, and rule of law offered in democratic contract theory, Pateman showed how the revolutionary rise of democratic governments and the principles of liberal governance changed how power over women's bodies was exercised. These new democratic institutions limited despotism while still assuring men individual sexual access and collective institutional control over societal reproduction (1988).

Gender as a system of inequality governing the formation of and reproduction of a "demos" connects this demographic constitution of families and populations to the democratic principles organizing states. As democratic governance became institutionalized, it was as a "brotherhood regime" in which men who were part of the same imagined family/nation shared the authority once reserved for patriarchs, inscribing new gendered and racialized national meanings into the linked institutions of family and state (Collins 2001, Pateman and Mills 2011). This brotherhood-based gendering of the modern nation-state was a new social formation, and

generated new rules of identity formation among the citizens it created and reproduced. The liberal democratic system changed marriage from being an inter-lineage tie to a principle for a gender division of labor and power between “public” of the brother-citizens and the “private” they dominated (O’Connor 1993, Phillips 1998). The market-based inequalities of the public sphere legitimated distinctions in power among men and reinforced the subordination of women as the dependents of “breadwinners” in ways that made earning capacity become central to masculine identity.

Yet, from the moment of democratic revolutions onward, institutionalizing brotherhood as a relation of collective male empowerment elicited resistance in the form of sisterhood. Women themselves fought for and gained access to the new institutions of collectively masculine political power (Ewig and Ferree 2013). Moreover, feminist struggles over a century have challenged men’s rights in the binary breadwinner-carer family, opening access for women to child custody, divorce, breadwinner-size wages and direct economic support from the state for reproductive work (O’Connor 1993, Siim, 2000). Although these on-going battles make democracies less masculine, women’s slow inclusion into the once all-male institutions of legislatures, parties, unions, and militaries has yet to erase their masculinity (Dahlerup 2018).

The replacement of classical forms of patriarchy with the brotherhood-breadwinner compact of liberal democracy expanded freedoms for (most) women, but did not make gender any less a “constitutive element of social relations based on perceived difference between the sexes” (Scott 1986, 1066). Men’s right to control women’s sexuality and regulate their reproductive labors remains embedded in varying degrees in all democratic nation-states, as Pateman emphasized thirty years ago, and as feminist protests continue to challenge. Importantly, citizenship is an exclusionary discourse and a gendered practice that is embedded in

the construction of classes, races, nations and generational cohorts by means of the affective ties of identity formed by families and the selective state recognition of these family ties (Collins 2001, Longo 2018).

Because gender is “a primary way of signifying relations of power” (Scott 1986, 1066), democratic discourses invoke gender meanings across these multiple differences to deplore “demasculinization” as indicating weakness and decline (Hoganson 1998, Hughey 2011). Concerns about masculinity as threatened or displaced are one clue that the hegemony of the breadwinner-brotherhood gender model that replaced classic patriarchies could indeed be failing, perhaps to be replaced in its turn by a less gender-binary model of the “demos.” As distinctions, or power-laden differences, these gender significations are never free of contradictions and intersectional conflict (Connell 2002, Collins and Bilge 2016). Yet the global sweep of contestation today suggests that this may be a crisis moment in the overall gender order of democracy.

As feminist pressure to demasculinize state power has drawn on grassroots and transnational resources to challenge the hegemony of the brotherhood-breadwinner model, citizens of many nations find it less “natural” that men would be so ubiquitously in positions of democratic leadership (Dahlerup 2018). A new discourse around women leaders’ exceptional effectiveness in crises has emerged to challenge the idea that either masculinity or market success is a qualification for democratic authority (North 2020). Disrupting the assumption that families need to be organized in gender-binary, heteronormative, nationally homogeneous ways has both changed legal rights for LGBTQ relationships and spurred defenses of these “family values” (Trimble 2013). The re-organization of care-work as a transnational form of labor in

sending and receiving countries has stripped away the illusion of it being domestic/private without removing its gendering as women's responsibility (Parreñas 2005).

Overall, the transnational context of legitimacy that secured the hegemony of brotherhood-breadwinner state-family relations has lost important support in the last fifty years, and likely will continue to do so. The demise of state socialism in Europe ended democracies' instrumental use of breadwinner-brotherhood politics as self-justification for gender inequality. After the Cold War, when this conflict between liberal democracy and its authoritarian opposite ended, the states of the former East were erased from the political imaginary along with their challenges to how the management of reproduction had been institutionalized in Western democracies (Kulawik and Kravchenko 2019). Instead, the breadwinner-brotherhood version of democracy found a new "other." Islam was now imagined as unitary, non-democratic theocracy importing patriarchy into Europe, and nationalist defense of the gender-binary family order was acclaimed, not merely as better than the patriarchal one it had replaced, but as if it already embodied the fulfillment of liberalism's pluralist and universalist promises of equality (Korteweg and Yurdakul 2014).

Calls for the explicit defense of breadwinner-brotherhood democracy, however, signal that its hegemony is already declining. To understand why this model is no longer self-evident to everyone, the argument turns now to consider democracy's material and cultural underpinnings in the demographic relations of reproduction.

The second demographic transition

Today's debates about breadwinning, brotherhood and masculinity as principles of democracy reflect material as well as cultural changes in the demos it represents. The fracturing of the breadwinner-brotherhood model was already evident in the 1970s and 1980s, but changes

observed in democratic ideals were not immediately connected to the gender order on which they relied. As citizens brought anti-hierarchical values and gender equality claims into democratic deliberations, theorists began to speak of “new” social movements and a “post-modernist” emphasis on individual self-fulfillment (Melucci 1989, Inglehart 1997). Theorists interpreted this politics as that of a new generation freed from concerns about material want. New, post-war cohorts were entering politics and accelerating desires for better, more participatory and egalitarian understandings of democracy (Inglehart and Norris 2013). In the “post-modernist” analysis, remaking the gendering of the reproductive system in an equalizing direction was merely one effect of individual and societal prosperity rather than a political dynamic in its own right. Today, as prosperity has declined, especially among youth, but the reimagining of democratic values continues, gender relations can be more readily recognized as an important and dynamic feature of these macro-politics, working through the medium of demographic transformations in locally specific contestations.

Today’s co-construction of material and cultural family politics on new terms is what demographers call the second demographic transition (Lesthaeghe 2010). This transition, which has reshaped the populations of Western Europe in particular, entails “sustained sub-replacement fertility, a multitude of living arrangements other than marriage, the disconnection between marriage and procreation, and no stationary population” (Lesthaeghe and Surkyn 2008, 82). The first demographic transition swept through Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, shrinking birth rates, extending life expectancy and decreasing the plausibility of classic patriarchy. The second demographic transition (SDT) is a widely used model of demographic change that centers on material changes in families that enable and express liberal values of personal freedom, political inclusion, and equality under the rule of law as realizable aims for a

demos far more diverse than the affluent, white, heterosexual men democracies originally envisioned (Lesthaeghe 2010).

While its population-wide changes (as the elderly outnumber children and migrant labor becomes economically necessary) are incontrovertible across Europe, the demographic transition also encompasses fewer and less gender-binary marriages, more children born outside of state-sanctioned marriage, and more practical separation between households (co-residential units) and families (normative connectedness) as spatial mobility rises (Lesthaeghe and Surkyn 2008). Reviewing the limitations of viewing this transition as a unidirectional, developmental process of modernization, Zaidi and Morgan (2017) emphasize material and cultural dimensions of uneven change. They argue that, “the family and fertility regime that the SDT predicts is a social structure produced by the simultaneous and inseparable impact of ideas (schemas or frames in people's brains and in the world) and materials (in the world) that promote or constrain particular behaviors.” (2017, 487).

While modernization theories tend to interpret new material practices of reproduction as resulting from linear changes in the normative values for societies as units, the evidence suggests instead that practical changes in organizing reproduction institutionalize new expectations for gender relations in very locally-specific, politically contested ways (Esping-Andersen and Billari 2015; Glass and Levchuk 2014). The second demographic transition is uneven across local regions and even neighborhoods, making new gender partnership norms widespread but geographically and generationally variable in their impact (Lesthaeghe and Neidart 2009; Morrill, Knopp and Brown 2011). Education, geographic mobility, access to breadwinner wages and reproductive control vary by location and cohort. This variation produces conflict along an axis focused on the reproductive relations of the demos.

Debates over full inclusion into the material promises of citizenship are not, as they are sometimes depicted, aligned on an exclusively cultural axis distinct from the material axis of the political economy (Elchardus and Spruyt 2012). The axes formed by both reproduction-centered and production-centered politics are simultaneously material and cultural (O'Connor 1993; Kováts 2019). The material fragility of the breadwinner-brotherhood compact offers a more attractive or threatening prospect of alternative cultural values to those who vary not only by gender and generation, but also by the structural locations both in market production and in reproductive relations defined by their nationalities, religious memberships and immigration statuses (Glass and Levchuk 2014; Glenn 2010). The combination of material changes in reproductive relations and alternative cultural norms about how gender and power should relate generates this “new” axis for political conflicts. The “new” right and the “new” left form the orientation of this axis, one correlated contingently in place-specific ways with the “old” right-left definition of interests.

Some analysts who note this axis emerging in practical democratic politics still overlook the gender relations in this system. For example, Thomas Piketty observes a broad shift in party contention across democratic systems over the past fifty or so years, but places the engine of change in higher education, as both supply and demand factor in forming “new left” interests as those of the professional/managerial class (2020). While economic changes in how prosperity and security are distributed are doubtless part of the intersectional changes in how societal reproduction is secured, to present them as “not about gender” because they are experienced by both women and men is to mistake the operation of gender as a system with the gendering of individuals it produces. Education, rather than gender-segregated occupational groups, reproduces stratification in a more gender-egalitarian form.

In the widespread aging of European societies propelled by the second demographic transition, the failure to reproduce “the nation” evokes anxiety about reproductive politics that democracies struggle to contain (Brown and Ferree 2005). The brotherhood compact had set rules for how liberal democratic states and families should operate, ones in which a sacred but privatized reproductive “sphere” of motherhood emerged as ideology along with a masculine entitlement to the competitively productive and politically powerful public “sphere.” In the times and places where these rules are truly hegemonic, the gender binary of sphere-specific roles and the maleness of democratic institutions seem natural and beyond debate. Conversely, the experiential context of the second demographic transition -- diverse households raising children with biological and non-biological relationships to caregivers, people “living apart together” in families spread across multiple households, and families supported by the transnational labor of family members of both genders -- disrupts the naturalness of breadwinner-carer gender binaries and separates the family as system of allegiances legitimating nationality from the household as a location of daily life undergirding states.

As the family and household split, how the nation is imaged as a demos varies, fracturing the brotherhood equation of nation-statehood. As more families live and reproduce transnationally, democratic nations now have to reckon among themselves with claims to belonging raised by the children and grandchildren of immigrants, as well as those coming from the more newly arrived. Self-governance rights extended to non-resident nationals may be denied to long-resident non-nationals on whose labor the state-as-householder depends. There are constant demands for revisions in the rules for acquiring (dual) citizenship as families re-form by transnational adoption, (re-)marriage, and relocation. In some countries, family unification is the most frequent basis for claiming a right to permanent residence (Longo 2018).

The European Union (EU), in loosely regulating personal mobility as well as by actively participating in directing member states to advance gender equality, places itself on the side of the less-national, less-gendered families of the second demographic transition (Clavero and Galligan 2009). The militarized rivalries of brotherhood states and the genocides of those perceived to be non-nationals are precisely the sources of war that the EU was designed to prevent. Its supra-national exercise of authority also implicitly questions the gendering of nation-state itself as masculine, with all the presumed autonomy that liberal theory associates with sovereignty. It is thus unsurprisingly targeted as dangerous by the new right's masculinized rhetoric of restoring domestic authority, both national and familial (Kranert 2019, Daddow and Hertner 2019).

As the second demographic transition continues to unsettle the normativity of the breadwinner-brotherhood understanding of nation-state authority at the macro-level, perceptions of being a winner or loser at the group or individual level vary for both men and women, and not only by education or generation. The benefits secured for caregiving by welfare state policies governed the gender relations of reproduction, but also invested more or less generously in women and children (Orloff 2009). The generosity of such reproductive investment depended on clear national boundaries around the demos. Perceived ethnic homogeneity, for example, served to foster the generosity of Sweden and other Nordic states who drew on the imagery of a "national home" for the national family to build systems of economic leveling (Schall 2016), while racial exclusion has a limiting force on US social provision of all kinds (Goldberg 2007). Generous and direct state support for reproductive labor, as in France, also created mothers who embrace their own citizenship as gendered, investing their political identities in the gender-binary model and claiming political entitlements within its terms (Scott 2007). In Hungary, too,

both before and after state socialism, the gender-binary understanding of citizenship gave some women motherhood interests and caregiver identities now threatened by the second demographic transition (Haney 2002; Kovács 2019).

In sum, there are complex and locally specific ways in which the second demographic transition is remaking the axis of political debate into one in which gender relations and family ideologies express fundamental differences in the understanding of nationhood and its relation to democracy. The conflict on this reproductive axis of politics is correlated with but not reducible to the economic interests in the older definitions of left and right. Using German politics merely as an illustration, I highlight the axis of reproductive politics constructed over time by macro gender systems, generational conflicts and intersectional issues to reframe democracy in terms appealing to a new left and new right.

Forming Germany's axis of reproductive politics from the left

Breadwinning masculinity was the explicit priority of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). Both its large center-left (SPD) and center-right (CDU/CSU) parties in the 1950s and 1960s agreed on the centrality of the breadwinner family to the state (Moeller 1993). Compared to many welfare regimes across Europe, the FRG was a “strong breadwinner state” with lagging levels of women’s labor force participation, little state support for childcare, and legal disregard for acts of gender discrimination. By the 1980s, structural changes in labor markets and the population changes of the second demographic transition created significant tensions and contradictions, especially for the masculinist institutions of breadwinner regimes (Daly and Lewis 2000; Gottfried and O’Reilly 2002).

However, the FRG also formed its identity as a nation by explicit, competitive contrast with the authoritarian socialist German Democratic Republic (GDR). Although in the 1950s the

GDR set a standard for women's equality that demanded women's full incorporation into the paid economy, by the early 1970s, it shifted to enhanced support for women's reproductive labor to "reconcile" work and family needs. Women-only reproductive benefits, however, intensified women's disadvantages in the labor market, encouraged men's resentment of "unequal treatment" on the job by gender, and absolved fathers of any responsibility for reproductive labor (Ferree 1993). These measures also succeeded in sustaining GDR fertility levels, while births in the FRG declined despite its more restrictive regulation of abortion and contraception (Ferree 2012).

Competition between the two states emphasized their different reproductive politics. The contrast between democracy in the west and autocracy in the east of the nation offered FRG politicians of both the SPD and CDU/CSU a license to remilitarize, sanctify the male-breadwinner family, protect the brotherhood institutions of unions, corporations and churches, and defend its own constitutional order by heavy-handed repression of both communist and neo-fascist movements (Art 2018). A space for a different reproductive politics had to come from outside its party system, emerging in the form of an "Extra-parliamentary Opposition" (APO) in the 1970s.

This new left was initially a motley crew of movements that rejected both the Cold War binary itself and the different versions of authoritarianism embedded in each side. They wanted more democracy, but looked for it outside conventional political institutions. They were gender-inclusive, disruptive, disproportionately young, and hard to categorize as anything other than "new" (Kriesi et al. 1995). Their issues were about social reproduction in precisely the ways the existing FRG parties had agreed to ignore. Rather than economic growth removing survival as an issue (as the post-modernism thesis held), their shared anxiety about population survival

produced specific protests focused on environmental destruction, military investments, nuclear armaments, and the threat of nuclear winter (Müller-Rommel 1985). A strong feminist movement for legalizing abortion emphasized women's claims for reproductive autonomy but also initiated a wider feminist debate over breadwinning, masculinity and sexuality (Ferree 2012). As part of its resistance to fascism, the new left prioritized commitment to anti-authoritarian teaching and learning as essential for producing democratic citizens (van Rahden 2017).

Emerging along with the second demographic transition, these new social movements spoke for rising generational interests across Western Europe (Kriesi et al. 1995). Middle class youth were their core constituency, and although their values were interpreted as economic privilege, in the FRG the reproductive politics of the new generation were explicit in intersectional challenges to the repressive demands for obedience, orderliness, gendered roles, and heteronormative sexuality that characterized the state's strong breadwinner-brotherhood order. They resisted valorizing economic growth at all environmental and human costs, favored care for the earth, and promoted peaceful means of conflict resolution. Their reproductive politics directly sought alternative ways of constructing democracy in less hierarchical and masculinized terms. The model they and their counterparts across Europe offered was partnership as the core of intimate relationships and participation as the core of democracy.

This new partnership-participatory democratic politics invented itself institutionally in the Green Party. Founded in 1980 from the infrastructures generated by local-level participatory movements (*Bürgerinitiativen*), the Greens shared their commitments to blocking economic developments with high environmental cost, offering a less professionalized understanding of political expertise, and seeing discursive debate rather than formal representation as producing

real democracy (Müller-Rommel 1985). The Green oppositional agenda also took “security” out of the masculinized frame of protecting national borders and into reducing environmental dangers and threats to international human rights. The party de-masculinized not only its agenda but also some of its own practices, insisting on an equal representation of women and men in alternating places on their electoral lists (Ferree 2012).

In a decade, Green fundamentalist (“Fundi”) forces of movement antagonism to the state were tamed into a pragmatic, “realist” (“Realo”) politics that used such access strategically. The SPD and even CDU began to shift competitively toward the anti-nuclear, pro-feminist, transnational environmental axis of reproductive politics that the Green Party introduced (Blühdorn 2009). Although party competition successfully brought most of the Green agenda into these mainstream parties, it was in diluted and compromised form (Blühdorn 2009). As the Greens moved in a more pragmatic and professionalized direction, the growing legitimacy of its new axis of reproductive politics allowed the party to become acceptable as a coalition partner at local, state, and finally national levels. Moreover, the reform processes that the SPD and CDU/CSU took on in the 1980s and 1990s focused on changing key parameters of the breadwinner model by reducing limits on shopping hours, adding work-family reconciliation measures, and “flexibilizing” employment contracts, although strong brotherhood-based unions continued to limit market fundamentalism (Hall and Thelen 2009)

However, in 1991 the incorporation of the GDR into the FRG on profoundly unequal terms brought in a population not so shaped by the second demographic transition. Many ex-GDR voters, disempowered by the unification process, embraced nostalgic discourses of old right and old left parties. On the right, the CDU/CSU represented the offer of inclusion in the “economic miracle” of breadwinner-based economic prosperity, and on the left, the reformed

communist party (PDS) emphasized a private sphere of interpersonal warmth and a public sphere of gender equality as the GDR's underappreciated accomplishments. FRG triumphalist politics, however, presented all these new citizens with "loser" status, economically inconsistent with the masculinity of breadwinning and politically "emasculated." Cartoons of the time depicted the GDR as a subservient wife and applauded the masculinity of the FRG as the nation asserted, "we are again someone" on the international stage (Carstens-Wickham 1998).

By the new millennium, the old left-right axis had bent to meet the Green end of the new reproductive political axis. The old left did not disappear. The PDS merged with a new electoral coalition of west-state voters disgruntled by SPD neoliberal reforms to form the Left Party in 2004, which mixed anti-elite populist rhetoric with economic prescriptions for radical reforms of the German corporatist system (Hough and Koss 2009). As a group, parties "on the left" were now diverse, encompassing not only a weakened version of classic left support for breadwinner families (SPD), a partly GDR-nostalgic, partly populist position of stronger state control over market power (Left Party), and the gender inclusive, environmentally protective, international human rights "new left" Greens. Green politics were not only innovative in bringing women more equally into political and economic power positions but in challenging the hegemony of a bigger-is-better masculinity by putting environmental care ahead of unending economic growth. Its partnership-participation model of citizenship emphasized concerns about survival that were more global than national, challenging the brotherhood model, and was less driven by the pursuit of more jobs-and-profits through capitalist growth, withdrawing support for the masculinity enshrined in the breadwinner compact.

Under Chancellor Angela Merkel, governing at the head of the center-right CDU/CSU in coalition with the SPD, many policies shifted toward the Green end of the reproductive axis,

including denuclearizing the economy, widening support for childcare by both fathers and mothers, and defending human rights in the face of a tidal wave of refugees seeking asylum (von Wahl 2011, Green 2013, Henninger and von Wahl 2018). As the FRG moved toward policies the reproductive left had championed, the CDU/CSU became unreliable as a supporter of reproductive right positions (Arzheimer and Berning 2019). Space was created for a mobilization to defend the breadwinner-brotherhood regime, which the Alternative for Germany (AfD) soon filled.

Masculinity Politics in the Reactionary Populist Right

In the postwar period, the moral taboo on neo-fascist parties in Germany had kept their vote share below the five-percent hurdle for entering parliament (Art 2018). In 2013, the AfD slipped past German resistance to reactionary populist discourse, emerging first as a small party with discontented center-right leaders and a strongly euroskeptic position, similar to UKIP in Britain (Kranert 2019). By 2015, AfD leaders dropped its early distancing from anti-Islam, anti-immigrant sentiments. Taking advantage of the crowds of protesters stirred up by PEGIDA, a social movement that framed the demographic issue as “resistance to the Islamization of the West,” it quickly blossomed into a reactionary, populist, new right party (Art 2018). After growing success at the state government level, it won 12.6% of the vote in the federal parliament in 2018, leading the shrinking SPD to unhappily join the CDU/CSU in a grand coalition to keep the AfD out of government (Arzheimer and Berning 2019). Along with the AfD, the Green Party also increased its share of the vote, underlining that both ends of the reproductive axis of debate now were fully engaged.

With new left family and state policies framed as linked threats to national survival, the AfD, like its older peers across northern Europe, is a *reactionary* development. Seeing a variety

of demographic and institutional changes underway, activists offer a fear-based discourse about a coming “demographic winter” of population losses (Trimble 2013) to urge immediate action to block feminist and LGBTQ “agendas” from capturing center-right support (Akkerman 2015). The AfD also challenges Germany’s costly engagement in the EU and its acceptance of immigration, economic burden-sharing and gender-equality directives. Its euroskepticism is integral to its “reclaiming sovereignty” as masculine autonomy (Kranert 2019).

The AfD program also identifies “elites” in Germany and transnational politics as the ones responsible for these threats, claiming “the people” can see that the breadwinner-brotherhood model is “traditional,” never questioned or changed until now, by simply using their “common sense.” This opposition between experts and the people, formal learning and common sense is a hallmark of *populist* movements, As Spruyt, Keppens and Droogenbroeck summarize,

“populism [is] constituted by four ideas—(1) the existence of two homogeneous groups, that is, “the people” and “the established elite”; (2) between which an antagonistic relationship exists; (3) whereby “the people” are portrayed as virtuous, and the elite are denigrated; and (4) the will of the people is considered the ultimate source of legitimacy (popular sovereignty). It is the *combination* of these four ideas that gives populism its specific, discursive logic (2016, 336).

The homogeneity of “the people” that populism posits sets its movements in opposition to pluralism, an essential component to the drive for gender inclusiveness. Identifying responsiveness of the state to such demands as “unmasculine” weakness, Björn Höcke, at the time one of the most influential leaders of the AfD, proclaimed in 2017 that the party had to constitute itself as a “fundamental opposition” to the state itself, since the “establishment” was conducting a politics “against its own people” (Birsl, 2017: 373). This opposition, Höcke

argued, explicitly demonstrated “our” need (as a country and as individuals) to prioritize “reclaiming our masculinity” in order to defend “ourselves” from both elites and immigrants (Sauer 2017, 1).

Because the AfD claims that the breadwinner family and the brotherhood state are necessary to the continued survival of the nation, it represents the *right end of the axis* of reproductive politics. This axis remains partly independent of classic left-right axis of state-market arrangements and redistributive family welfare politics, and shaped voting in 2017 more than the classic one (Franzmann, Giebler and Poguntke 2020). The AfD uses populism to compete for voters who feel left behind by social change, drawing them from the disappointed right of the CDU, the working class constituency of the SPD (Adorf 2018), and the ex-GDR identifiers of the Left Party (Olsen 2018). Their voters are disproportionately men (Daddow and Hertner 2019). The SPD has largely seen its constituents vanish as these voters become convinced that their worthiness as men and brothers is not appreciated. Their voters are by no means opposed to a strong safety net, but in framing the safety net as generous to less morally worthy families, the AfD convinces them that “a reduction in the number of immigrants would also free up funds to pay for the needs of the deserving welfare recipients” (Adorf 2018, p.30).

As Michèle Lamont (2009) observed of French working class men, their breadwinner masculinity framed men from outside the national brotherhood as unworthy fathers and deficient as men. Nationalism and the value of national identity are bound up intimately with the family-state model of the breadwinner-brotherhood compact, in which immigrant men and families are judged as intruders and unentitled participants in welfare state generosity. The perception of disvalued racial-ethnic groups as “cutting in line” to take benefits from the deserving has a long history of being used to divide the working class, turn the politics of racial-ethnic entitlement

into resentment, and mobilize working class men to support exclusionary nationalism (Goldberg 2007; Hughey 2011). This brings the politics of masculinity to forefront of the new right.

Because masculinity is a gender relation, not a trait of individual men, men's diverse practices of masculinity are also oriented around the values and actions of the hegemonic breadwinner-brotherhood template, whether as subordinate or resistant to it (Connell and Messerschmidt 2015). Because the reproductive axis of politics is openly intersectional, those issues directly identified as gender politics are only a small subset of the concerns where mobilizing a defense of masculinity matters.

Masculinity as performative politics among leaders and as a threatened identity among voters is a hallmark of the new right populist style of engagement. The AfD draws disproportionately from men as voters and activists, has the lowest representation of women in the German parliament of any party (10% compared to 30% average), and displays a combative style of "toxic masculinity" in its leadership (Daddow and Hertner 2019). These "men's parties" (*Männerparteien*) use language of hegemonic (breadwinner-brotherhood) masculinity precisely to draw in the men who feel personally marginalized from the economic success and political authority attributed to this ideal (Norocel et al 2018). They may include some women leaders, and appeal to women by emphasizing that their states already "have gender equality," but demand that the state not "force equality" on families and disrupt the natural differences that give women their special nurturing capacities (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2015).

The different strategic uses and personal resonances of masculinity for populist politics show that the breadwinner-brotherhood system organizing families and states is not just "about gender" in the narrow sense of only recruiting men as representatives or voters, or only targeting issues identified as gender equality politics, like gender mainstreaming or quotas (Paternotte

2020). Gender organizes the abstract macro-system level of material practices of reproduction and the cultural values associated with them in dynamic interaction with other historically contingent macro-level changes including neoliberal globalization and population displacements due to wars and climate changes. These macro-arrangements intersect at the micro level at which individuals experience their identities and as a meso-level principle of inequality in organizations like families, workplaces, and legislatures (Choo and Ferree 2010; Collins and Bilge 2016). Which intersections are most prominent across issues offers some insights into this co-construction of inequalities.

For example, the intersectionality of class and gender is most obvious in the uses of masculinity in appeals to working class men. They are not necessarily individually the “losers” they are stereotyped as representing, but face economic precarity in the changing neoliberalized economy (Elcharus and Spruyt 2012). “Nostalgic deprivation” or the sense that “things used to better” for people like them is especially pronounced in the working class, where deindustrialization has affected whole communities (Gest, Reny and Mayer 2018). The sense of vulnerability to increasingly chilly economic winds is arguably processed as a sense of relative deprivation, a coping strategy that imagines widespread crime, fraud and line-cutting by “others” as creating their problems (Elchardus and Spruyt 2012). Rather than only the young men with few good job prospects and older breadwinners facing lower pensions and job protections (groups certainly growing through the labor rights restructuring the SPD led), the vulnerability of families is widespread but uneven. Policy shifts toward the reproductive left give conventional breadwinner households reason to believe that national government “elites” do not care for them, making populist discourse attractive, as the AfD discovered.

Nation/race is most obviously intersectional in the “protection racket” that masculinity

offers to defend vulnerable femininity from other men, when men with whom women are closest are their probable abusers (Young 2003). Because the brotherhood ideal is to protect “their” women from “other” men, this use of masculinity constructs the “brothers” as protecting the community as a whole, with women’s bodies being used to depict the nation (DeHart 2017). Although Germany likes to deny that it is a “country of immigration,” its population has been materially shaped since the 1950s by waves of immigrants (Green 2013). The German-born sons and grandsons of Turkish labor migrants who came in the 1950s face a media landscape that presents them as exemplifying the racialized, overly sexualized, and dangerously misogynistic Islamic Orient (Ewing 2008). The hyperbole and hysteria associated with reporting the “New Year’s Eve sexual assaults” in Cologne in 2015 as carried out by mobs of men seeking asylum heightened xenophobic fears and sharpened specifically anti-Islamic prejudices (DeHart 2017).

This racialized gender framing strongly inspired the rise of PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the West) in Germany. German women were encouraged to carry whistles and treat the risk of sexual assault on public streets as an acute danger (De Hart 2017). The AfD, initially wary of throwing in its lot with PEGIDA, discovered after Cologne that anti-Islamic anger was a popular demand that other German parties had not met. Once it spoke to this “need” for mobilized masculinity, the AfD rose meteorically in state election after election. Overall, brotherhood-based masculinity helps to affirm a mythic national identity for men as beneficent, protective, and powerful in contrast to others who are sexually aggressive, oppressive and violent, while also offering women members an identity in which they can see themselves as emancipated and also protected (Korteweg and Yurdakul 2014).

Sexuality is explicitly intersectional with gender in the combined political assaults on measures extending equality to families that are not homonormative or gender-binary. The new

right constructs feminisms that are not about women's rights within the confines of breadwinner-brotherhood norms as being a threatening, new "gender feminism" (Datta 2017, Kovats 2019). Affirming women's motherhood and sexuality as natural features of the gender binary, breadwinner-brotherhood democracies long forced women to choose between difference and equality. Also known as "Wollstonecraft's dilemma," this fundamental paradox shaped women's position in collectively masculine politics. As the hegemony of the gender-binary structure of families and states visibly fades in the growing acceptance of everything from women heads of government and same-sex marriage to trans rights, this once-liberal version of women's equality-in-difference gains appeal to conservatives. Even the Vatican dropped its older patriarchal argument about women's lesser humanity to affirm the gender binary in individuals and families as essential to national survival (Datta 2017).

In sum, the AfD is a reactionary, populist, new right party that shares a commitment to brotherhood and breadwinning with other European parties of the same type. As a "men's party," its leaders use masculinity as a discourse and mobilize voters' material concerns about family change. Its leadership is aware that the mainstream parties have moved away from the strong breadwinner model Germany once exemplified and operate in a European Union context in which national autonomy is traded for European interdependence. While the AfD emerged at the opposite end of the reproductive axis from the Greens, its reactionary politics were not merely a backlash to the specific political gains of feminists, although it does lead current constitutional challenges to gender quotas on party lists. Speaking to citizens whose life experiences are less shaped by the second demographic transition than deeply threatened by seeing it among them, the new right captures a sense of nostalgic deprivation and spreads fear about changes to a way of life framed as "traditional."

Conclusion

The meaning of democracy is no more fixed or immaterial than the meaning of gender. The democratic revolutions of the 19th century changed the principles of male domination from patriarchy to institutions of collective masculinity. Brotherhood as the basis of male-defended national borders and breadwinning as the basis of a division between public and private systematically used gender to allocate both material benefits and cultural legitimacy. The hegemonic masculinity of this system was experienced in daily life as buttressed by the economic resources collectively male institutions gave to individual breadwinners. Women's position in the family was materially organized by the caregiving assigned to them and culturally legitimated by ascribing to personality the choices reproduced by this gender binary.

This system has lost its unchallenged hegemony. The second demographic transition has been remaking the rules for what counts as a family. Democratically pluralist views of "families" have replaced "the family" as the costs and benefits of forming households and producing progeny have shifted by gender, education, wealth and national citizenship. The breadwinner-brotherhood version of democracy no longer can rely on reproducing its demos by the gendered division of labor within its own borders. Transnational migration strategies spread families across households in multiple nation-states, unsettling the equation of family-nation. The significance of education in the economy has turned families into systems for hoarding educational assets and intensified the public impact of private mother-work.

Such unavoidably intersectional changes in the material conditions of reproduction have made political actors focus on the reconfiguration of the links between family and state in producing a demos for democracy. Reproductive relations organized by gender suggest that a

new institutional framework for democracy is being forged, one that makes partnership a principle for families and participation a test for the real existence of democracy.

The high politics of German states, party systems, and policy reflect this transition from the breadwinner-brotherhood model to a more partnership-participatory one. This reproductive axis is semi-independent of the old, economically defined left-right axis, and the interests it represents are explicitly generational as well as gendered. The new left and new right share criticisms of neoliberalism, public austerity and growing inequality among families, but have very different conceptions of what kinds of families states should recognize and what kind of citizens these families should reproduce. For example, conflicts over immigration divide nationalists who assume a brotherhood model of entitlement to state support only for those breadwinner-carer families inside the nation from new left sympathizers among the economically diverse members of geographically mobile families (both immigrants and cosmopolitans) and non-binary families (both single mothers and same-sex couples).

Environmental politics are also conducted on this reproductive axis, with the defenders of (male, breadwinner) jobs and (male, corporate) profits uniting the old left and right and lining up against new left concerns about the reproductive threat of the resource intensive, nationally competitive growth model. Yet by governing from a broadly defined center with the support of a coalition of parties whose identities and programs are shaped but not defined by reproductive politics, Chancellor Merkel has been able to pragmatically manage the reproductive challenges that immigration, climate change and now the Covid virus have thrown at her government.

The “family values” invoked to defend the brotherhood-breadwinner model are not those of classic patriarchies, but they are also not the values of younger generations who see little opportunity to realize the material security that the breadwinner-brotherhood state once offered

its normative standard families. Generation is itself an intersectional category, yet one neglected by virtually all intersectional theorizing. By no means are all young people on the left end of the reproductive axis of politics, but those on the right are also angry at how poorly that model of democracy is serving them. Reactionary, populist new right politics mobilizes this anger, and uses a rhetoric of masculinity to feed grievances into scapegoating and attacking those who are at the other end, represented as having the wrong families, the wrong nationalities, or the wrong vision of the future. However, it cannot on its own bring back the breadwinner or brotherhood privileges its members have lost.

The effort to protect democracy from the challenge this anger poses would do well not to defend the masculinized version that once institutionalized those privileges but to improve democracy in both theory and practice. Rising generations need global security beyond the limitations of brotherhood nations and personal opportunity beyond the limitations of breadwinner families. A democracy that begins to remove its masculine biases is how they will find it, if they do.

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