The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA): Femonationalism on the Facebook Pages of Female Right-Wing Populist Party Leaders in Finland and Germany

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2026/27 Research Methodologies in European Cultures and Societies

Warm-up activity:

- Vevox - Present view

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Right-Wing populist Parties (RWPP) ...

- Promote an antifeministic worldview that discriminates against women.
- Nevertheless, adopt strategically ambivalent positions:
  - "We can therefore see that, although right-wing populism clearly tends towards gender discrimination overall, there are also strategic statements opposing discrimination against women." (Reisigl 2020: 213; translated)
  - Calculated ambivalence
  - Appropriation of “feminist” frames:

    ”the frames are emptied of their gender justice seeking content and transformed via ‘frame-co-optation’ (Cullen, 2020) into a 'pro-women against-feminists' stand." (Dietze 2022: 278)

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Women in Leadership Positions in RWPPs: Selected Examples

- Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) – Alice Weidel
- Rassemblement National (früher Front National) – Marine Le Pen
- Lega – Susanna Ceccardi
- Vlaams Belang – Barbara Pas
- Dansk Folkeparti – Pia Kjærsgaard
- Nye Borgerlige – Pernille Vermund (ehemals)
- Alternativ för Sverige – Jessica Ohlson
- Ungsvenskarna – Denice Westerberg
- Fratelli d'Italia – Giorgia Meloni
- Fremskrittspartiet – Sylvi Listhaug



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Alice Weidel

5. Januar um 18:18 ·

Weißt Du noch, wie schön Deutschland einmal war? Und glaubst Du immer noch, dass ausgerechnet die CDU all die Probleme löst, die sie selbst verursacht hat? Deshalb am 23. Februar AfD!



https://youtu.be/Ince-MOCQVE

Outline

1. Research Questions
2. Femonationalism and Right-Wing Populism
3. Corpus and Method (DHA)
4. Analysis: (examples)
    1. Nomination
    2. Prädikation
    3. Argumentation (topoi)
5. Summary and Outlook

1. Research Questions

01

What image of women is constructed in the personal Facebook posts of *Alice Weidel* and *Riikka Purra*?

02

To what extent can these constructions be interpreted as *femonationalist* discourse patterns?

03

Which discursive strategies, as defined by the *Discourse-Historical Approach*, are used to produce these patterns?

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2. Femonationalism

- The strategic appropriation of feminist ideals for anti-Muslim politics (Dombrowski/Hajek 2021), or the use of arguments supporting women's rights by right-wing parties.
- Refers to:

  "both to the exploitation of feminist themes by nationalists and neoliberals in anti-Islam (but, as I will show, also anti-immigration) campaigns and to the participation of certain feminists and femocrats in the stigmatization of Muslim men under the banner of gender equality. Femonationalism thus describes [...] the attempts of western European right-wing parties and neoliberals to advance xenophobic and racist politics through the touting of gender equality [...]" (Farris 2017: 4).

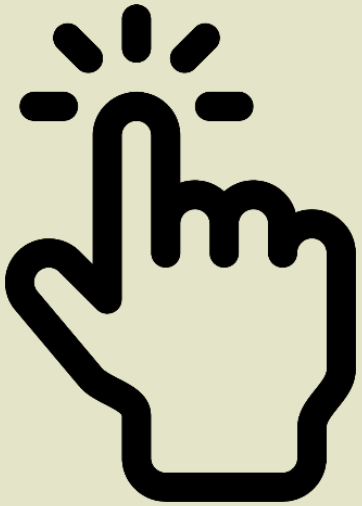


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2. Calculated ambivalence

- "[It] serves to suggest that opposing political and ideological interests and positions are compatible, to appeal to several groups of voters simultaneously, to break taboos without having to accept responsibility, and to avoid committing to an unambiguous position." (Reisigl 2020: 203; translated)
  - *A classic example:*

    ► *"*We support the Bundeswehr and compulsory military service [...] We respect the commitment of pacifists [...] They have a legitimate place in the SPD*" (Quoted in Klein 1996: 206; translated)*



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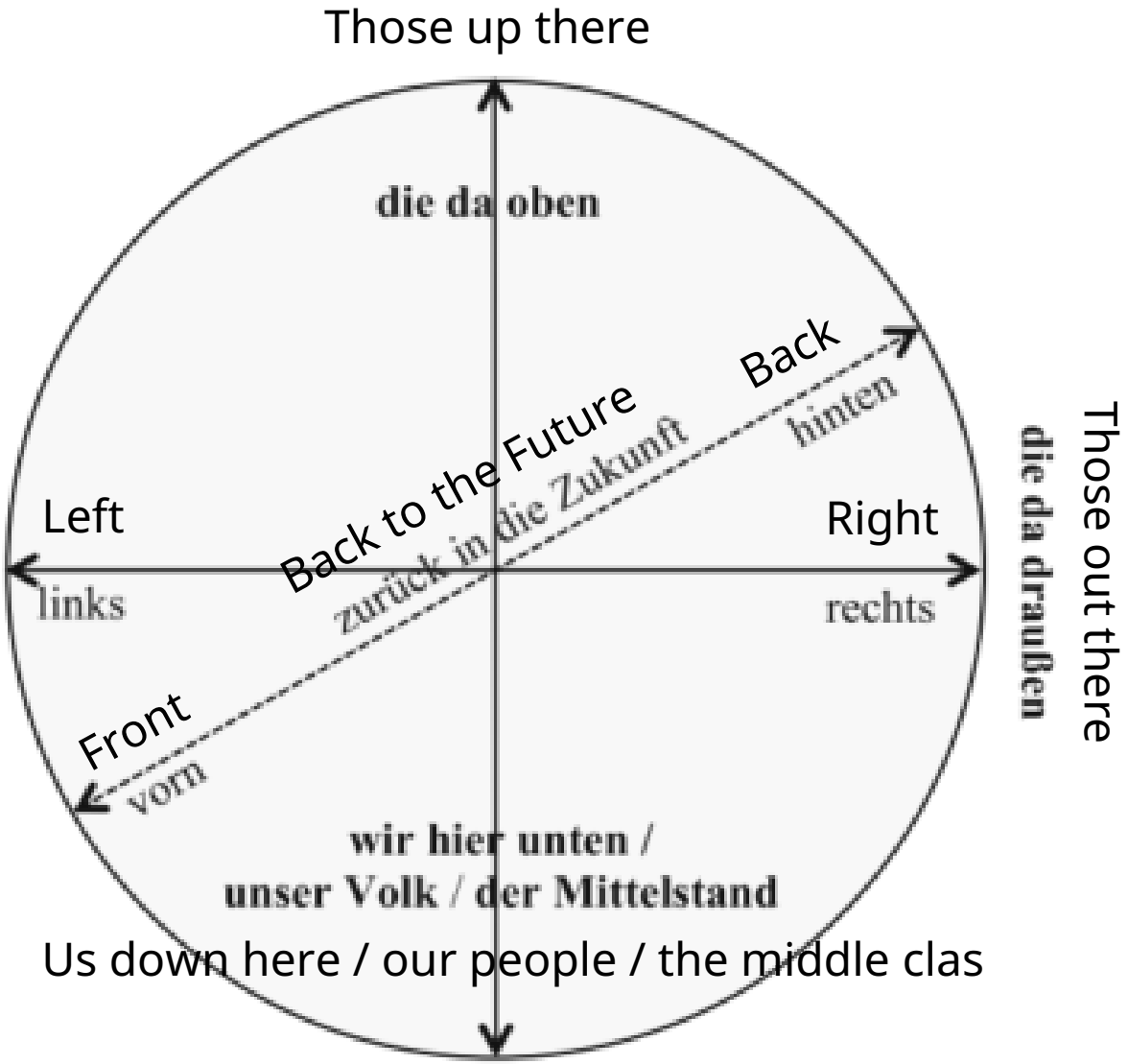
Vevox

- Vevox - Present view

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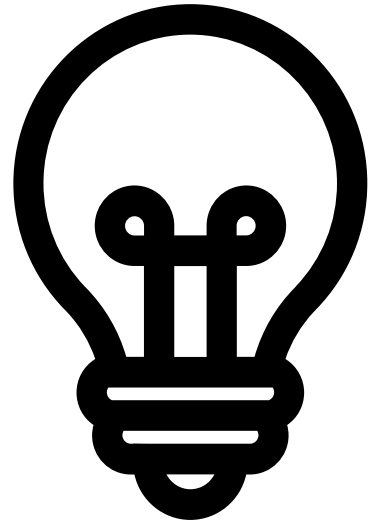
2. Right-Wing Populism

Abb. 2 Räumliche Indexikalität des oppositionellen Rechtspopulismus



Reisigl 2020: 212

Spatial indexicality in oppositional right-wing populism



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3. Corpus and Method

Categories	Weidel				Purra			
	2022 (268)	2023 (140)	2024 (177)	2025 (206)	2022 (214)	2023 (146)	2024 (134)	2025 (385)
(1) Feminismus/ Gender roles	7 [1-7]	5 [8-12]	2 [13-14]	3 [15-16, 71]	2 [17-18]	4 [19-22]	5 [23-27]	4 [28, 77-79]
(2) Thread posed by Muslims/Islam	3 [29-31]	7 [32-38]	9 [39-47]	9 [48, 67, 69, 70, 72-76]	3 [49-51]	2 [52-53]	3 [54-56]	9 [57, 80-87]
(3) Personal narratives	1 [58]	2 [59-60]	1 [61]	1 [68]		5 [62-66]		

TABLE 1: Corpus and Categories

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3. Corpus and Method

1. **Feminism / Gender roles**
    - Theoretical background:antifeminism in right-wing populist parties (Dietze 2018, Reisigl 2020)
    - Indicators: ‘(gender) ideology’, ‘quota’, ‘feminism’, ‘discriminatory’, ‘woke-madness’, ‘family values’
2. **Thread posed by Muslims/Islam**
    - Theoretical background: femonationalism (Farris 2017)
    - Indicators: “Muslim men”, “immigrants”, “(primitive) customs”, “prone to violence”, “dangerous”, “protection”, “brutal attacks”, “failure of the system”
3. **Personal narratives**
    - Perspectivisation: for example, first-person statements and biographical experiences used to establish moral or political authority
    - Construction of contrasts: for example, “these people”

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Table 3.1 Discursive Strategies in the DHA

Questions to approach discursive features	*Discursive strategies*	*Purpose*
How are persons, objects, phenomena, events, processes and actions named and referred to linguistically in the discourse in question?	**nomination**	discursive construction of social actors discursive construction of objects, phenomena, events discursive construction of processes and actions
What characteristics or qualities are attributed to social actors, objects, phenomena, events, processes and actions mentioned in the discourse?	**predication**	discursive characterization of social actors, objects, phenomena, events processes and actions (e.g., positively or negatively)
What arguments are employed in discourse?	**argumentation**	persuading addressees of the validity of specific claims of truth and normative rightness
From what perspective are these nominations, attributions, arguments expressed?	**perspectivisation**	positioning the speaker's or writer's point of view and expressing involvement or distance
Are the respective utterances articulated overtly, are they intensified or mitigated?	**mitigation and intensification**	modifying the illocutionary force of utterances in respect to their epistemic or deontic status

Reisigl 2018: 52

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3. Methode: Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)

- Nomination
  - Forms of linguistic reference to, or naming of, social actors and phenomena
- Predication
  - Attribution of specific qualities or characteristics to actors and phenomena
- Argumentation
  - Which arguments or argumentation schemes (topoi) are used to justify the characterisation of individuals or groups?
- Perspektivisation
  - From which standpoint are nominations, attributions and arguments presented?
- Intensification / Mitigation
  - How explicitly are claims expressed, and how are they strengthened or weakened

(Cf. Reisigl 2018: 52; Wodak/Köhler 2020: 38)

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4. Analysis: Nomination



Bei einem [Flüchtlingsheim] musste eine Frauenstatue, 'ne nackte Frau, musste abgebaut werden, weil man musste ja verhindern, dass die jungen Männer, sind ja alles Flüchtlinge aus muslimisch geprägten Gesellschaften - dass denen nicht irgendwie die Tassen aus dem Schrank fallen, wenn die ne nackte Frau sehen. [...] Was ich damit eigentlich sagen will [...] es ist so traurig, dass diese [...] Regierung [...], die eigenen Werte, das eigene Land, so schändlich verraten für solche Leute.

At one [refugee accommodation centre], a statue of a woman, a naked woman, had to be removed because they had to make sure that the young men, who are all refugees from societies shaped by Islam, would not somehow lose their minds when they saw a naked woman. [...] What I am actually trying to say [...] is that it is so sad that this [...] government [...] so disgracefully betrays its own values, its own country, for people like these.

Weidel (17.09.2023 [36])

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4. Analysis: Nomination

- Categorisation of perpetrators through ethnic or religious labels
  - „Muslims“, „ a group of Syrians“, „an Afghan“ (Weidel)
- Criminological Categories
  - „Rapist“, „Murderer“ (Weidel)
- Incompatibility between cultures
  - ” […] on esimerkiksi lukemattomasti kulttuureita, joissa naiset eivät ole tasa-arvoisia miehen kanssa […]” (Purra)
  - “[...] there are, for example, countless cultures in which women are not equal to men [...]” (Purra)

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4. Analysis: Nomination

Actor/Group	Nomination	Diskursive function	Example (Post)
Refugees	*Young men [from] societies shaped by Islam*	Homogenisation as a culturally alien and threatening group	Weidel [36]
Political decision-makers	*This government*	Populist vertical differentiation: the people versus the elite	Weidel [36]
Non-Western cultures	Cultures in which women are not equal to men	Cultural denigration and justification of exclusionary migration policies	Purra [54]
Iraqui legislators	”Shia legislators”; “Islamic principles”	Religious othering and an argument of cultural incompatibility	Purra [57]
Immigrants in Finland	“The issue is that there are people in Finland who should not be here.”	Rhetoric of exclusion and othering	Purra [50]

TABLE 2: Examples of Nomination Strategies in Facebook-Posts by Weidel and Purra

4. Analysis: Predication



- Criminalising Attributions:
  - “Rejected asylum seekers from the notorious countries of origin” (Weidel)
  - “Murderous”, “multiple previous convictions […] for violent and sexual offences” (Weidel)
- Inkompatibility between Islam and the West
  - Conservative Shia legislators in particular supported the change so that the law could be ‘adapted to Islamic principles’ and ‘Western influence on Iraqi culture could be reduced’. Just think how monstrous this is. Legislation that allows little girls to be married off!”
  - Child marriage framed as a monstrosity (Purra)
  - an “Islamic view of women” presented as incompatible with Finnish values
    - Honour killings, genital mutilation and gender segregation (Purra)
- Numbers / Pseudo-Statistics ([38], [46], [54])
- Emotionalisationierung
  - Horrific”, “murderous”, “exploding” [38], “shameless” [55]

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4. Analysis: Predication

Target of Attribution	Predication	Discursive function	Example (Post)
Feminist politics	„Ideologically blinkered […] mainly in the areas of gender-inclusive language and quotas […]"	Delegitimises feminism as an irrational ideology	Weidel [3]
Economic effects	"Feminism does not put food on the table!"	Frames feminism as economically worthless	Weidel [3]
Asylum seekers from countries shaped by Islam	„Rejected", "notorious countries of origin", "murderous", "multiple previous convictions […] for violent and sexual offences"	Constructs a negative perpetrator profile and culturally stigmatises the group	Weidel [32], [48]
Violent offences in public spaces	*„Horrific attack", "attacked, beaten up or killed [every day]"*	Creates emotional impact and a perceived need for action through a cumulative list of forms of violence	Weidel [48]
Islamic practices: honour killings, genital mutilation and child marriage	„Shameless"; "backward cultures"	Moral denigration of Islam	Purra [55]

TABLE 3: Examples of Predication Strategies in Facebook Posts by Weidel and Purra

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4. Analysis: Argumentation

“Mass migration and the abandonment of migration controls have deadly consequences. […] Non-Germans are six times more likely to use a knife and seven times more likely to commit sexual offences than German citizens […] Since 2017, according to figures from the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA), more than 52,000 women have been victims of a sexual offence committed by asylum migrants. Main countries of origin: Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq. The number of gang rapes rose to 761 last year, more than two instances of this horrific crime every day. In 209 gang rapes in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, almost three-quarters of the perpetrators are non-Germans or have an obvious migration background.”

(Weidel, 11 September 2024 [43], translated from the video transcript)



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4. Analysis: Argumentation

Topos	Description	Diskursive effect	Example [Post]
Cultural threat	Individual incidents are generalised to portray Islam as threatening and incompatible with Western values	Creates a threat scenario and a cultural dichotomy: “the West versus others”	Purra [57]; Weidel [43]
Betrayal	Betrayal by the elite is presupposed to justify border closures and deportations	Right-wing populist narrative: “the people versus traitors”	Weidel [36]
Security	Suggests that even minor concessions to, or tolerance of, Islamic practices lead to a collapse of security	Creates urgency and legitimises radical measures	Purra [55], Weidel [43], [48]
Overburdening	Frequency or quantity figures are used as “proof”, without citing sources	Legitimises restrictive measures	Weidel [38, 43, 46], Purra [54], [55]
Natural order	Gender roles from the 1980s are idealised as a normative standard	Nostalgic framing constructs feminism as disruptive	Purra [26]
Decline of education	Universities become “queer-red training grounds for political cadres”, accompanied by demands to dismiss professors of gender studies	Frames censorship as protecting “established” knowledge	Weidel [16]

TABLE 4: Examples of Topoi in Facebook Posts by Weidel and Purra

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5. Summary and Outlook

Examination of femonationalism through a comparative analysis of the Facebook pages of female right-wing populist party leaders

- Strategic patterns in gender narratives communicated through social media (Category 1)
- Co-optation of feminist arguments for anti-immigration campaigns (Category 2)
- Use of calculated ambivalence to present opposing political positions
- Outlook
  - Potential analyses across different media, for example TikTok and channels affiliated with political parties

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