CALL FOR PAPERS

Excluding Diversity:
At the Intersections of Anti-Immigrant and Anti-Gender Mobilizations

- International conference -

Organized by the Interdisciplinary Research Center on Families and Sexualities (CIRFASE)
at the University of Louvain (UCLouvain) at Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium.

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 15 september 2019
https://sites.uclouvain.be/ExcludingDiversity

Some thirty years after the fall of socialisms in Europe and democracy becoming supposedly the dominant standard of political legitimacy in the so-called Western world (Held, 1998), current paradigm shift suggests that (liberal) democracy is in crisis. Two parallel developments have been particularly important for fuelling this major change. First, the rise of anti-immigrant parties and actors that have steadily gained in popular support over the last decades (Muis & Immerzeel, 2017; Lazaridis, 2016). In Europe, political formations such as the Dutch Forum for Democracy or the French National Rally - previously known as the National Front - have increased parliamentary representation; the Freedom Party of Austria and the Italian League became part of the ruling coalitions; and the Polish Law and Justice and the Hungarian Fidesz rule their countries. In Northern America, Trump has risen to power also thanks to his very loud anti-immigrant rhetoric which incarnated into the presidential mission of building a wall along the Mexico-US border (Garrett, 2018). Similarly, recent Australian governments got to office by promoting and implementing so-called "zero-tolerance" policies to target specific groups of third country nationals (Snow and Moffit 2012). Despite a number of mutual differences, these parties and actors share a strong rhetoric of exclusion targeting immigrants and other ethnic minorities (Muis & Immerzeel, 2017).

Parallel to this growth of anti-immigrant formations, anti-gender mobilizations mark a second development that spread rapidly over the last decade and further threatened some of the foundations of (liberal) democracy. Across diverse European societies, transnational anti-gender actors embraced grassroots democracy discourse and strategies in the pursuit of limitations and reversals of gender and sexuality rights (Paternotte & Kuhar, 2017). From *La Manif pour Tous* taking to the streets of France in the protest of same-sex marriage, through German Christian activists' mobilization against gender-mainstreaming to the successful referendum banning same-sex marriage in Croatia, various gender and sexuality issues are becoming ever more prominent and contentious in the European political discourse. These trends, however, are not limited to the European continent, as similar anti-gender stances are promoted, for instance, by sectors of the Republican party in the US – and, more generally, within the framework of the Alt-Right movement – as well as by president Bolsonaro in Brazil (Paternotte & Kuhar, 2017; Hawley, 2017; Connell, 2019). Using "the defence of family" as a battle call, these groups and activists promote another rhetoric of exclusion, as they target all who deviate from traditional heterosexual roles.

The rise and growing popular support of anti-immigrant and anti-gender movements in (liberal) democratic systems are typically analysed separately by the migration and populism scholars on the one side, and by the gender and sexuality scholars on the other side. However, such academic separation fails to identify and interpret many lines of affinity that exist between these mobilizations. Sometimes, the merging of these two exclusivist tendencies are obvious and explicit. For example, Polish Law and Justice and Hungarian Fidesz are well known both for their strong anti-immigrant stance and for their blocking of EU gender and LGBT equality programs. Similarly, Trump has enforced new anti-transgender policies and cut funding for all the programs even discussing abortion, while fighting to get

his wall with Mexico erected. Similarly, other radical right actors in Europe have jumped on the band-wagon of anti-gender mobilizations, seeing "gender ideology" as an easy enemy image to unite them with other disaffected actors across a wider political spectrum (Kováts, 2017). In such movements, "proper" gender and sexuality positionality is often used as another defining factor of who really belongs to the "native" group that the radical right is "protecting". For example, Croatian right-wing actors were easily mobilized by the referendum banning same-sex marriage because in their interpretation the "real" Croats are Catholic and therefore strictly and traditionally heterosexual.

But these "proper" gender and sexuality positionings can be also mobilized differently in other contexts, depending on the salient self-images of the nation. For example, the Dutch radical right parties have used a performative support for the LGBT rights in the Netherlands to stoke up anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim feeling, by presenting these groups as cultural enemies to Dutch gender and sexual equality. Often representing a U-turn with respect to their previous positions concerning gender and sexuality, this perspective is shared increasingly by a number of other anti-migrant formations – with examples coming, for instance, from Belgium and most Scandinavian countries. By depicting specific groups of foreigners as carriers of a series of traditional and illiberal views on family, sexuality and the role of women in society, anti-migrant discourses and policies are justified to ensure the survival of Europe's gender equality and the protection and promotion of LGBTs' rights (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2015; Pels 2011; Gustavsson, 2015).

Interesting similarities abound, not only in rhetoric - e.g. discourse of exclusion, anti-elitist positioning - but also in strategies – e.g. the use of the media to achieve the over-representation in the public discourse and to create feelings of fear and anger. While plenty of convergences can thus be detected among these apparently different political parties and movements, their discourses and policies of multiple exclusion(s) seem to increasingly get popular support in most (liberal) democracies.

With this conference, therefore, our main goal is to establish a dialogue between scholars examining anti-immigrant political formations and those studying anti-gender mobilizations, and/or the public responses to them. We are interested in exploring more deeply the intersections and differences between these two exclusionary political trends in Europe and beyond, and we strive to make explicit the connections that may be underappreciated in these two different lines of research.

We welcome in particular (but we are not limited to) works that explore the following topics:

- The connections between the anti-immigrant discourse and gender/sexuality classifications.
- Political discourse and policies concerned with migration by anti-gender actors in various countries.
- Gender/sexuality discourse and policies by anti-immigrant parties in various countries.
- Perceptions and ideologies of families uniting otherwise different political actors, social movement groups and networks.
- Local, national and/or international communicative and political strategies of anti-immigrant and anti-gender political actors and formations in Europe and beyond.
- Public support for anti-immigrant and anti-gender parties, policies and public discourses.
- Public resistance/opposition to anti-immigrant and anti-gender parties, policies and public discourses.

Abstracts of paper proposals of up **to 350 words** should be submitted through the form available at: https://sites.uclouvain.be/ExcludingDiversity by **30 of June 2019**. Selected authors will be informed by the end of July, as the conference will take place in Louvain-la-Neuve in the second half of March 2020. The conference is organized by the Interdisciplinary Research Center on Families and Sexualities (CIRFASE) at the University of Louvain (UCLouvain), Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium. If you have any questions, you can contact giacomo.orsini@uclouvain.be and/or tanja.vuckovic@uclouvain.be.

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