Old Ghosts, New Enigmas:

The Rise of the Far-Right in Germany

Julius Schneider

A thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Government

University of Essex

October 2022

Abstract:

Until recently, Germany stood out as the "exceptional case" without strong far-right support compared to its neighbouring countries. Since World War II, it had contained the far-right almost perfectly, even though it shares many characteristics with its neighbours and polls amongst the highest in Europe regarding xenophobic attitudes in the population. Yet, until 2017 no far-right party ever managed to achieve federal representation. Then, the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) entered the national parliament with 12.6 percent of the vote. This begs the question: why were far-right parties rejected in the past but the AfD suddenly considered as an electorally viable party?

I consider one particular framework coupled with a distinct theoretical apparatus as especially capable in answering the puzzle. Namely, I take "mainstreaming" processes into view and analyse them with the help of discourse theoretical concepts especially suited to account for hegemonic changes in modern societies. I show that the way public elites (like politicians, intellectuals, or mainstream media outlets) talk about the integration of immigrants, national identity, or foreigner crime can help the far-right in making their formerly considered radical claims become acceptable and legitimate. To provide stronger theoretical grounds for this argument, I utilise the language of the Essex School of Discourse Theory and their notions such as a changing horizon, dislocatory events, or examples of a "theft of enjoyment".

Further, while the mainstreaming framework is becoming more influential, from recent publications the German case is conspicuously absent. This thesis rectifies this shortcoming. Similarly, current work on mainstreaming mainly accounts for the process of how mainstream actors co-opted existing far-right rhetoric and tropes and thereby lent them legitimacy. But I will argue that the mainstreaming process in Germany started without an active and threatening far-right party being present.

Acknowledgements:

It goes without saying that writing this thesis would not have been possible without many people who supported me on my journey thus far. I will try my best to account for everyone. Yet, as we know, acknowledgments are an impossible object and always fall short of their own aspiration. Therefore, others are present in their absence.

My first thanks go to my supervisors David Howarth and Jason Glynos. Their help and support has been invaluable, and whatever the situation, I could always count on them. The effort and passion that goes into their work to keep this incredibly stimulating environment going that is the Ideology and Discourse Analysis research group is remarkable and unique. I hope that many after me will benefit from it in the same way I did. I also want to thank my panel chair, Laura Montanaro, for her help along the way and my two examiners for their time, it is greatly appreciated.

I also want to thank those people who came before and, largely, due to whom I am the (academic) subject that I am. Nikita Dhawan introduced me to the thought of Antonio Gramsci and without Sabine Gatt's seminar on the hegemonic theory of Laclau and Mouffe I wouldn't be doing what I am doing right now. They truly dislocated me during my undergrad in Innsbruck. Mark Devenney, Clare Woodford, Andreas Ventsel, and Mari-Liis Madisson have helped my project at different times along the way and I want to thank them for their time and kindness.

I can't imagine there to be a more supportive group of people than the PhD cohort at the Department of Government at Essex. The (affective) bonds that hold this group together are a special thing and I cherish them a lot. Lunch at 1 at Blues/Lakes/Zoom/Common Room kept me sane when everything else was floating. I'd need to ask for a word-count extension to name everyone and I am anxious to forget someone, so I won't. But special thanks go to Craig Love, Reid Kleinberg, Daniela Bracke, Jimena Vazquez, and Anam Kuraishi, who have kindly commented on various parts of my work. It was an incredible joy to be a part of the IDA seminar for three years and listen to and be inspired by the wonderful people who share an interest in post-structuralist discourse theory. In the same vein, I want to thank my fellow MA students without whom I don't know if I would have embarked on this path.

I am incredibly lucky to have many special people in my life who have shaped me and kept me going. Mari and Liisi were there for crucial parts of my journey and have helped me to become the person that I am. Leo, Sebastian, Thomas, Michel, and Sancho have been the rocks in my life for a long time and will always be, no matter the distance. Thanks to the love and support of Ronit, I was able to keep going when times were difficult. She has provided much of the peace I needed to finish this project and I am incredibly thankful for that.

But the biggest thanks have to go to my parents, Bruni and Matthias. A boy couldn't imagine a more supportive environment for whatever he thought he might be interested in doing. In discourse theory, we talk about the openness of the social as a fundamental fact of life. They opened the world to me, in every which way I was going, and I can't put into words how lucky I am to have had their unwavering support at all times. I dedicate this thesis to them.

List of Tables, Figures, and Images

List of Abbreviations

AfD - Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany)

ARD - Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen Rundfunkanstalten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Working Group of the Federal German Broadcasters Governed by Public Law)

BAMF - Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees)

BKA - Bundeskriminalamt (Federal Crime Agency)

CDU - Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands (Christian Democratic Union of Germany)

CSU - Christlich-Soziale Union in Bayern (Christian Social Union in Bavaria)

DVU - Deutsche Volksunion (German People's Union)

FAZ - Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (Frankfurt General Newspaper)

FDP - Freie Demokratische Partei (Free Democratic Party)

FPÖ - Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (Freedom Party of Austria)

NPD - Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (National Democratic Party of Germany)

PEGIDA - Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident)

PKS - Polizeiliche Kriminalstatistik (Police Crime Statistics)

REP - die Republikaner (the Republicans)

SPD - Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)

SRP - Sozialistische Reichspartei (Socialist Reich Party)

taz - die Tageszeitung (The Daily Newspaper)

WDR - Westdeutscher Rundfunk Köln (West German Broadcasting Cologne)

SZ - Süddeutsche Zeitung (South German Newspaper)

ZDF - Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen (Second German Television)

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

That's how the world was going to be run!
The other nations mastered him, except
(In case you think the battle has been won)
The womb is fertile still from which that crept

(Brecht 2017, 81)

1.1 The (Im)Possibility of Far-Right Success in Germany

Until recently, Germany stood out as the "exceptional case" (Arzheimer 2019, 91) without strong far-right support compared to its neighbouring countries of Austria, Switzerland, France, Belgium, or the Netherlands. Since World War II, it 'managed to contain the far-right close to perfection' (Art 2018, 79). Even though it shares many characteristics with these countries and conditions for the success of a far-right political project in Germany seemed conducive, since it regularly polls amongst the highest in Europe with regards to xenophobic attitudes in the population (Art 2006, 5). Yet, until 2017 no far-right party ever managed to achieve federal representation. Until the *Alternative für Deutschland* (Alternative for Germany, AfD), having been founded only in 2013, changed the inconceivable and entered the national parliament, the *Bundestag*, in 2017 with 12.6 percent of the vote as the largest oppositional party.

This is puzzling because up until the founding of the AfD, commentators strongly argued against the possibility of a successful far-right party in Germany. Regarding the chances of such a development taking place, Frank Decker, one of Germany's most eminent researchers on right-wing extremism, contended in 2012 that '*a wide ranging establishment has indeed not taken place – and is in the near future also not to be*

expected' (Decker 2012, 21).[1] Therefore, we have an enigma to solve: why have the ghosts of the past returned in Germany?[2] How could it be that in the country which has the fight against fascism inscribed in its constitutional identity that - against all expectations - the womb was still fertile? In less metaphoric terms, the core research question of my thesis is:

How did the far-right become an electorally viable choice in Germany?

I consider one particular framework – the logic of mainstreaming (Mondon and Winter 2020) - coupled with the distinct theoretical apparatus of the Essex School of Discourse Analysis (Laclau 1990, 2005a; Glynos and Howarth 2007), to be especially capable of answering this question. More precisely, I draw upon processes of "mainstreaming" to show that the way public elites like politicians, intellectuals, or mainstream media outlets talk about the integration of immigrants, national identity, or foreigner crime, helps the far-right to make their formerly considered radical claims become acceptable for significant parts of the population. To provide stronger theoretical grounds for this argument, I supplement this focus on mainstreaming with concepts derived from discourse theory, which I take as especially able in accounting for social and political change in modern societies (Laclau and Mouffe 2014).

My analysis shows that the distance between an "acceptable" mainstream discourse and a "radical" far-right discourse has shrunk remarkably in recent years. We can account for this, in discourse theoretical terms, by analysing how the "horizon" on which far-right parties' claims can be understood and made sense of has changed from the times of far-right parties like the *Republikaner* to the AfD. I do so by tracing

[1] In this thesis, whenever a quote is written entirely in italics, this indicates a translation from German to English by myself. If I want to highlight a part of a quote, this will be done in bold to avoid confusion.
[2] The title of my PhD thesis was inspired by and plays on Mike Davis' "Old Gods, New Enigmas – Marx's Lost Theory" (see Davis 2020).

the developments in public discourses, such as the different stages in the “integration debate”, detailing how, by increasingly pointing out supposedly essential differences between Germans and (Muslim) immigrants, elite political actors have mainstreamed images of threat and cultural incommensurability that rapidly closed the gap to far-right demands that were formerly considered radical. They have further enabled affective investments into a paradoxical *Leitkultur,* which, while devoid of positive content, nevertheless functioned as a nodal point in structuring the debate. Mainstream parties have defended these strategies with the argument that “one has to take the fears and sorrows of the population seriously” (see Section 4.5), but I argue that they ignore their own powers in the construction of political identities.

I also contend that while previously a silent consensus existed between media outlets to not cover the far-right at all, not even critically, this consensus has broken down by now. This is especially visible when it comes to televised political talk shows, which provided ample screen time for the AfD in front of an audience of millions. I show how over a time period of over two years - during the crucial stage of the radicalisation of the AfD - political talk shows were obsessed with topics like integration, refugees, Islam, and terrorism. Indeed, talk show producers framed a disproportionate number of episodes in such a sensationalising way that made far-right identifications more likely. Aided by such a large amount of coverage similar to their own problem diagnoses, the AfD was able to leave its perceived position on the fringes of society, even when it continued to radicalise ever more.

Such an analysis is necessary because while the “mainstreaming” framework is becoming more influential, from recent publications the German case is conspicuously absent. Even in comparative works looking at the cases of Britain, Denmark, Finland, France, the Netherlands, or Sweden, the rise of the AfD is still

missing (see Odmalm and Hepburn 2019). But also in the publication that introduced the mainstreaming concept via a broadly discourse-theoretical ontology, the German developments are only mentioned in passing (see Mondon and Winter 2020). As a further distinction, the work of Mondon, Winter, and their close collaborator Katy Brown mainly accounts for the process of how mainstream actors co-opted existing far-right rhetoric and tropes and thereby lent them legitimacy. But I will argue that the mainstreaming process in Germany started without an active and threatening far-right party being present. To lay the foundations for that claim and to flesh out the puzzle in more detail, the next section looks at the past failures of far-right parties in making their viewpoints socially acceptable to further flesh out my puzzle. I then turn to a brief overview of the rapid success of the AfD, followed by the description of my methodological approach and the overall structure of the thesis.

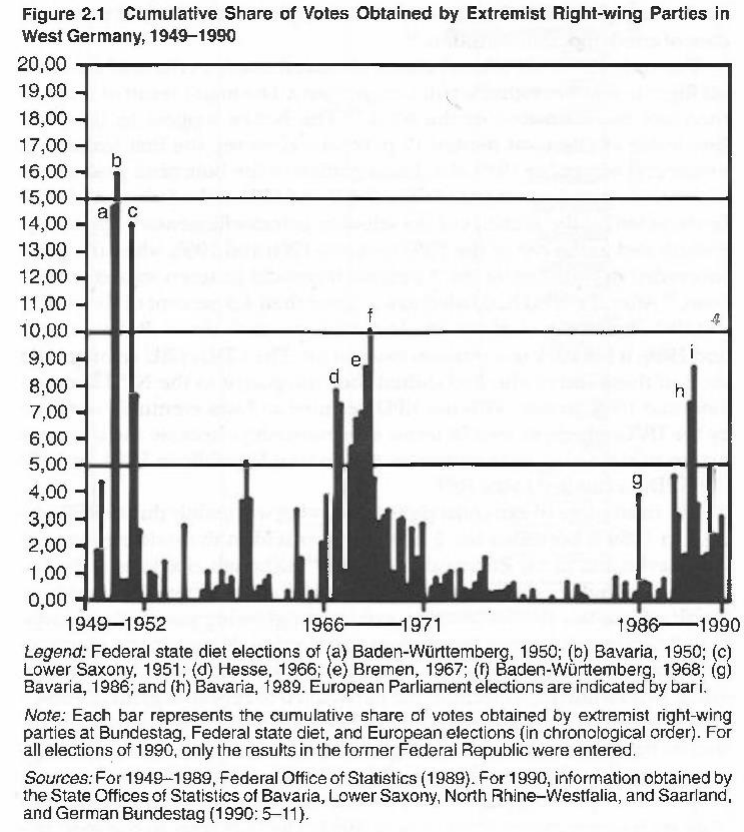
1.2 The Past Failures of the Far-Right in Germany

Historically, scholars divide post-war far-right support in Germany into three waves, based on Zimmermann and Saalfeld's (1993) research. The first wave refers to the quick rise and fall of the Socialist Reich Party (*Sozialistische Reichspartei*, SRP) between 1949 and 1952. The second wave is based on the ascendancy of the National Democratic Party of Germany (*Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, NPD), who came the closest of all far-right parties preceding the AfD to win a seat in the Bundestag and collapsed after these high hopes were not fulfilled at the end of the 1960s. Two decades later there are for the first time multiple potentially successful far-right parties emerging concurrently, the Republicans (*die Republikaner*, REP), the German People's Union (*Deutsche Volksunion*, DVU), and a reinvigorated NPD. This

development, marked at times by competition or collaboration, is summarised by the third wave, lasting from 1989 till the early 2000s.[3]

It is important to note, though, that even if there are three discernible “waves” of far-right support, their success was nevertheless limited.[4] While there are certainly some spikes, in the original model between 1949 and 1990, the far-right managed cumulatively only in 4 out of 133 elections (national and local) to gain more than 10 percent of the vote. Only 14 times, all on the state level, a far-right party eclipsed the 5 percent electoral threshold (Zimmermann and Saalfeld 1993, 58). This is nicely illustrated in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 - Three waves of (failed) far-right support (Zimmermann and Saalfeld 1993, 59)



[3] For an overview of the respective parties see Decker and Neu (2018).

[4] Therefore, in Germany as in other mainly European nations, there is a definite “hyping” of the far-right taking place. This means that the amount of scholarly attention given is way larger than the phenomenon would suggest and threatens to make the “problem” of far-right support larger than it is. David Art (2011, 191) correctly pointed out back then that even though the far-right have ‘failed to win a single seat in the Bundestag since 1945 (…) radical right parties in Germany generate more books, articles and newspaper stories per vote cast for them than their counterparts anywhere else’. Below I will position myself within the “hype”.

What is indicated in the wave model, and will become clearer later, is that in Germany there is a particularly high, and fairly stable, far-right *potential* present in the population. But, interestingly, at most times voters do not *act* upon those attitudes. This basic paradox has given rise to a differentiation between an "attitude-potential" and a "voting-potential" (Pfahl-Traughber 1999, 79). While a large section of the population seems to be sympathetic to far-right slogans, historically not a lot of them were willing to vote based on those attitudes (Nagle 1970, 10). It follows that a simple causal relationship between extremist viewpoints leading to extremist political success cannot be ascertained (Scheuch and Klingemann 1967, 11). This begs the question, why has the far-right historically been so unsuccessful, when the conditions seemed very conducive? Of course, the way Germany has dealt with its fascist past goes a long way in explaining the societal norm of not voting for the far-right, as well as a silent agreement by the media to not give exposure for far-right actors (see Ellinas 2010). But, as we will see, both of these have broken down and my task is to explain why it did.

It is worthwhile looking more closely into the one party that came closest to the AfD in terms of organisation and ideology, the *Republikaner*. I will use the case of the *Republikaner* at different points in the thesis to contrast their failed world-making efforts with more successful attempts by the AfD to analyse what was responsible for their difference in fortune. The *Republikaner* were the first electorally relevant far-right party which emerged not as a splinter from existing extremist parties, but from a democratic one. The party was founded in 1983 by Eckhard Voigt and Franz Handlos, two former MPs of the Bavarian "Christian Social Union" (CSU), the sister party of the "Christian Democratic Union" (CDU), which operates solely in Bavaria. The duo was complemented by a former journalist of the state-funded Bavarian Broadcasting

network, Franz Schönhuber. He was just relieved of his journalistic duties after he had published his memoirs, in which he supposedly glorified National Socialism (this was later not upheld in court).

The REP certainly voiced xenophobic remarks, but did not ground them in a biological theory of race and it lacks the anti-bourgeois element that so far united neo-Nazi parties (Backes 1990, 14). Additionally, and this is no coincidence, the party does not use any signifiers like “Germany”, “nation” or “people” in its name (Ignazi 2003, 71) to seem different than other, traditional far-right parties. In short, the party tried to walk the tight-rope of appealing to far-right ideas but from a seemingly respectable place in the mainstream and not on the fringe. Yet, the strategy failed and their campaigns on immigration, foreigner crime, and the threatening downfall of the German nation never translated into relevant and continuous electoral success. Though I also need to point out that the re-unification of Germany turned the attention away from the various crises the REP diagnosed and hence impacted its fortunes (Stöss 1990, 134). It also took away one of their core demands, the unification of German brothers and sisters.[5]

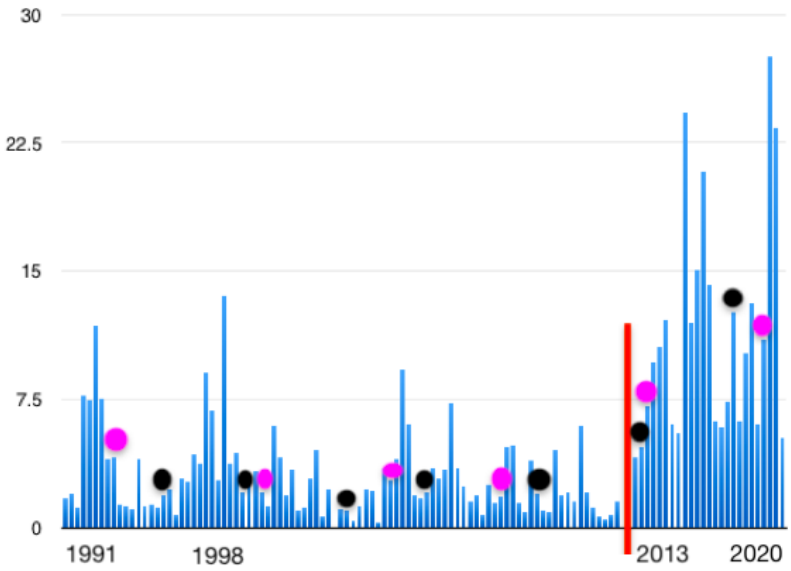
Hence, the first three waves of far-right support differ markedly from the fourth one: the breakthrough of the AfD. Most importantly, the AfD avoided being a hotshot like the other parties and did not fall back into irrelevance after a time of brief success. With the exception of the first two contested elections right after its establishment, the party was voted into every single parliament in every election since 2014, as Figure 1.2 shows.[6] This is a remarkable result for a far-right party in post-World War II

[5] After the end of the third wave, and at times already during it, the far-right scene shied away from representative politics, focusing rather on cultural activities and the editing of journals and books (Jaschke 2013, 23). Therefore, far-right activity had moved more “underground” from formerly a fight for parliamentary seats towards a fight for ideas and, especially in Eastern Germany, a fight for the streets with irregular periods of flaring violence, especially against immigrants and minorities.

[6] Figure 1.2 is a continuation of the original three wave model to show the overwhelming success of the AfD. Every bar represents one election, until 2013 cumulatively for far-right parties, as in the original model. The red line shows the founding of the AfD. After 2013 the figure only represents AfD’s vote share to highlight their success. No other far-right party managed to gain representation in a parliament,

Germany. But it also beats out the other waves in terms of total success. The AfD entered the *Bundestag* as the first far-right party with 12.6 percent, which almost tripled the previous best score of any far-right party, the NPD, who reached 4.3 percent in 1969. If one were to rank all election results by far-right parties, the first non-AfD result comes in at number eleven with the DVU winning 12.9 percent in the state of Saxony-Anhalt in 1998.[7] The analysis that is developed in my thesis ends with the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, as it greatly changed the strategy of the AfD in different ways, whether it be in their problem-defining capability, communication strategy, or the alliances they enter.[8]

Figure 1.2 – The fourth wave of far-right support



federal or state-wide, since 2013. Please note the difference in scale to the original three wave model. Black dots indicate national elections, pink dots elections to the European Parliament. All other data points are from elections for regional parliaments. This comparison shows that when it comes to first order versus second order elections, in Germany, there are only differences between national and sub-national elections but not between national and European Parliament elections. This is quite different to many other European countries, where the far-right has often more success in EP than national elections. High abstention rates in second order elections combined with a higher likelihood of protest voting make it easier for far-right parties to win votes, though this is only partially confirmed for Germany.

[7] However, we should absolutely not equate political victories solely with electoral success. Indeed, as I point out in the thesis, many contemporary discourses in German society are currently couched in terms the far-right identifies with and exceed their, truthfully speaking, still niche electoral support.

[8] The fortunes of the far-right in a post-COVID Europe are still very much up in the air, even as many struggle to adapt to the new reality (see Katsambekis and Stavrakakis 2020).

In short, the far-right was for a long time an unimportant political actor on the fringe in Germany. Small victories notwithstanding, no party achieved continuous success or entered the *Bundestag*. Being largely excluded from media access, the far-right was unable to find an audience for its claims and failed to shed its extremist appearance. But the situation was dramatically changed when the AfD rapidly became a viable political alternative. Moreover, I contend that so far, no approach can explain this puzzle, and especially not the pace with which it occurred.[9]

1.3 A Short History of the AfD

To tackle this puzzle, it is first necessary to broadly cover the short history of the AfD, the developments of its policy stances, and the many power struggles that influenced both. Of course, this overview is not exhaustive,[10] and it will be complemented with a more fine-tuned analysis, focussing for example on AfD's views on the integration of foreigners in Chapter 4 or on internal security in Chapter 5. I also want to emphasise that the reality is always more complicated and messy than I can account for in this brief overview.

The AfD was founded in February 2013 by a loose coalition of economists or business-friendly individuals and detractors from various parties. There were the economics professor Bernd Lucke who previously ran for the liberal-niche *Freie Wähler* party, Alexander Gauland, a long-time bureaucratic servant in the CDU and co-publisher of a regional newspaper, or the long-time journalist Konrad Adam, amongst

[9] In the next chapter I will show that most explanations for this development have some hidden essentialist assumptions in them and that they see political identities mostly as fixed. This is most prevalent in accounts taking recourse to "authoritarian character traits" in the population, or those discerning a "crisis of modernity", which produces fear and anxiety, or when the far-right is said to tap into pre-existing "unsatisfied demands".

[10] For one of the first book length treatments and a more in-depth overview of the AfD in English, see Rosellini (2019).

others. In this sense, the early AfD strongly resembles the *Republikaner* or the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) in their mix of mainstream detractors and semi-publicly known academics and publishers (Mondon and Winter 2020, 44).

Being founded half a year before a general election proved difficult and the party quickly received the label of being a single-issue "professors" party (Hartleb 2022, 243). Such a view was probably too rosy and innocent in retrospect. The one issue bringing these diverse people together was the recovering of economic independence and decision-making power from EU institutions in the wake of the 2009 debt crisis. This is what the "*alternative*" in "*Alternative für Deutschland*" refers to; a wake-up call against the supposed alternative-less stance of Chancellor Angela Merkel to keep Greece in the currency union.

Due to this short time-frame, the AfD only developed a brief, 4-pages long manifesto before the general elections (AfD 2013). Of course, financial demands like returning to national currencies took up most of the space, but the AfD was in its neoliberal outlook also not opposed to immigration, both high-skilled and low-waged (Butterwegge, Hentges, and Wiegel 2018, 40). They even pointed out asylum seekers' right to work (AfD 2013, 4). This is not to say that ethno-nationalist elements weren't present right from the start, as the participation of Gauland or the later party head Alice Weidel, a member since 2013, shows. Based on this mixed bag the new and exciting party received lots of media attention and scored 4.7 percent of the vote in the autumn 2013 election, barely missing out on the electoral threshold of 5 percent.

After this surprise achievement some rifts emerged in the party regarding its overall outlook and strategy – rifts that continue until this day. This is the struggle between pragmatists, who envision an eventual government coalition, and radicals, who claim to stand up uncompromisingly for the "German people", who's way of life is

"under threat". Yet every struggle started out and ended up further to the right than the previous one with even the surviving "pragmatists" moving ever more to the right.

The first open conflict came to the fore when the strategy for three sub-national elections in Eastern German states in 2014 was revealed. Those elections were the battlegrounds where AfD trialled for the first time a campaign not based on EU financial policy but instead on ethno-nationalism, foreigner crime, and internal security (S. Kim 2017, 5; Friedrich 2017, 57). The experiment proved worthwhile as the AfD received 9.7 percent of the votes in Saxony, 12.2 percent in Brandenburg, and 19.6 percent in Saxony-Anhalt. Yet the march to the right didn't occur unopposed within the party – which became visible when its relationship to the in 2014 emerging xenophobic social movement PEGIDA ("Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident") took the spotlight. PEGIDA's hub was Dresden, where in its heydays 20.000 people demonstrated on Mondays with the pro-Democracy slogan *Wir sind das Volk* ("we are the people"), borrowed from protests in the former GDR. While the AfD was of course sympathetic to the movement, its loose structure and virtually non-regulated public speakers resulted in blatantly cultural reductionist, Islamophobic, and violence legitimating speeches from which AfD had to distance itself officially (Geiges, Marg, and Walter 2015). Only in 2018 did the AfD cancel the so-called "incommensurate" rule which had forbidden official collaboration (Friedrich 2017, 93).

One crucial event that strongly impacted the debate on the direction of the party was the publication of the *Erfurter Resolution*, which was written by the fascist Björn Höcke[11] and André Poggenburg in the spring of 2015. This lead to the founding of the extreme-right fringe of the party, helpfully called *Der Flügel* (the fringe, or translated

[11] A court decided in 2019 that Höcke can legally be called a fascist as such a denomination 'rests on verifiable fact' (see the Guardian 2020). In the Thuringia elections of 2019 the AfD reached 23,4 percent of the votes with Höcke as their main candidate, enough for second place.

directly, the wing). The authors lament in the Resolution that the AfD is no longer a true alternative. Instead, it is accused of committing *'treason with respects to the interests of the country'* like the other parties, discern a loss of sovereignty and German identity due to '*societal experiments*' (Höcke and Poggenburg 2015, n.p.).[12] Even though Bernd Lucke wrote a counter-resolution, his proved way less influential and the party gave in more and more to the influence of the *Flügel*, especially in East German AfD associations.

Within this climate the first of many leadership struggles took place. From 2013 until 2019 there were four different leadership pairs (in 2013 it was a triplet) elected and with each election the party marched further to the right. These leadership struggles are intriguing for the discourse analyst as both approaches to populism - the more mainstream, populism as a thin ideology one (Backes 2018; Eatwell 2018) and the one put forward by Ernesto Laclau (2005a) and others - pay great attention to the role of charismatic leaders. Yet in the AfD we find so many changes in its leadership personnel that such a thesis is difficult to uphold. If anything, the lack of a single leader might have benefitted the AfD as wide parts of the population could identify with the various wings of the party, each of them represented by different party elites.

This first leadership struggle in the summer of 2015 saw the economics professor Bernd Lucke lose out to the more nationalist inclined Frauke Petry and Jörg Meuthen. Many analysts agree that from this moment the latest we can talk about an unequivocal far-right party (see e.g., S. Kim 2017, 6). Of course, this occurred in what is called the "migration crisis" of 2015 which definitely impacted the fortunes of the far-right. But I do not take this act of naming for granted. Instead, by analysing elite

[12] *Der Flügel* was declared unconstitutional by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution in March 2020 and "officially" dissolved, with all its internet presence deleted. A leftist, anti-racist blogging site has preserved the official document from which I have quoted.

discourse like articulations by mainstream politicians and the media, I show how something gets produced as a crisis in the first place. In other words, I examine how supposed threats and solutions become widely accepted and which dislocatory moments change our understandings of certain events. Additionally, I argue that quite quickly after the summer of 2015, the focus of the AfD changed from immigration towards Islam and cultural identity. A leaked email from the ever-polarising and taboo-breaking Beatrix van Storch from March 2016 shows this point well. In it, she says regarding AfD's first proper manifesto published a few months later that

> *Islam is the most explosive topic of the manifesto (…) The press will feast on our rejection of Islam like no other topic of the manifesto (asylum and Euro are wasted, don't bring anything new …). That is why we have to make the topic of Islam public with a bang* (quoted in Heitmeyer 2018, 216).

Therefore, as I mentioned before, we should view the AfD less as an anti-immigration party but rather an anti-Muslim (and internal security) party. This culturalistic discourse was tied towards the German version of the "Great Replacement Theory" and similar fear-mongering as articulated by Enoch Powell his infamous "Rivers of Blood" speech in the late 60s in the UK (Hall et al. 2013, XVI–XVII). In this vein, Höcke warned against Germans 'becoming the minority in their own country' (quoted in S. Kim 2017, 7) at a rally. AfD then entered the national elections of 2017 with a campaign on these issues and a communication strategy under the post-truth slogan *Mut zur Wahrheit* ("with bravery to truth"), denouncing the mainstream media as a *Lügenpresse* ("lying press", see Lilienthal and Neverla 2017). There, AfD achieved their norm-breaking result of 12.6 percent of the vote – with an abstention rate of 24 percent - and entered the *Bundestag* as the largest opposition party.

However, this success if anything exacerbated the divisions in the party and to some surprise, the co-leader Frauke Petry resigned after election day. Just like Lucke

before she also fell victim to the march to the right. In another parallel, she also started her own new party, again like Lucke, but both never became relevant. Alexander Gauland took her place as co-leader, moving for the first time into the official spotlight after leading the party unofficially. As opposed to previous far-right parties, the AfD managed to defend and increase its vote share in every election it contested until the very last election in the time frame under consideration in this thesis, losing one percentage point in February 2020 in the city-state of Hamburg where far-right parties historically don't do well. AfD's best results came in 2019 when in three elections in East Germany, in Brandenburg, Saxony-Anhalt, and Saxony the party received 23.5 percent, 27.5 percent, and 24.4 percent of the vote, respectively. While the regional variations in the AfD vote are an important issue that warrants attention (see e.g., Pates and Leser 2021; Weisskircher 2020), this thesis is less suited in explaining them. I will argue in the conclusion that ethnographic or interview-based research designs are more suited to provide satisfactory answers in this case. I will focus on the timeframe of 2013 until 2017 especially as I consider the years between AfD's creation until the national election of 2017 as most important for my research question of what made far-right claims acceptable. But I will also incorporate some insights of later years and end my analysis with the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, as justified above.

Finally, I want to briefly cover the question of who makes up the voter-base of the AfD. As is often the case with far-right parties in Europe, men are more likely to vote for a far-right party and the same holds true for the AfD (Goerres, Spies, and Kumlin 2018, 13). But when it comes to other socio-demographic variables, a number of unexpected points come to the fore. Low income or occupation is not strongly correlated with AfD support, just as the level of education does not have much

influence. If anything, Goerres et al. (2018, 14) find a higher propensity of voting for AfD for individuals with higher income or a medium level of education (see also Arzheimer and Berning 2019, 4; 6). In short, the AfD draws voters from all over society and ex-voters from all other parties without any one standing out (Hansen and Olsen 2019, 15).

What comes as no surprise is that AfD voters want to see immigration limited, are intolerant against Muslim, and hold chauvinist viewpoints regarding economic redistribution (Goerres, Spies, and Kumlin 2018, 7–8). Yet, I do not take insights like these for granted and just accept them. Instead I ask how such preferences come about in the first place? As I will flesh out in more detail in the next chapters,[13] I consider it unwarranted to assume in an essentialist way that, simply, 'right-wing views and negative attitudes towards immigration have become the main motivation to vote for the AfD. This, together with the increased salience of immigration and the AfD's new ideological profile, explains the party's rise' (Arzheimer and Berning 2019, 1). Rather than just accepting this increased salience, I will ask how it came about that immigration became such an important issue for many voters? The creation of moral panics (Chapters 4 and 5), framing theory (Chapter 6), and affective investments into "The Nation Thing" (Chapter 4) will be of help here.

Yet, I have to be clear that in my analysis I will talk less about why some *particular individuals* vote for the AfD. Instead, I want to ask how it was possible that a party making outrageous, xenophobic, and Islamophobic statements *can be voted for* by almost 6 million people in Germany as in 2017? How did the previously unspoken societal consensus to not vote for a far-right party break down? How can far-right

[13] Especially the sections in the literature review on socio-political and socio-cultural explanations for the rise of the far-right will take up again the question of particular attitudes and issue positions for far-right support.

demands and claims *make sense*, and be taken as adequate interpretations of what's wrong with society and how to fix it? But before I lay out in more detail how I will answer these questions, I clarify first the choice and meaning of the term "far-right".

1.4 A Note on Language

Following the linguistic turn (see Searle 1996), I not only consider the role of language to be paramount in constructions of social reality, but I also assume that language is important and not straight-forward when it comes to the categorising of fringe political actors. This is because we find a proliferation of denominations in recent times - like the extreme-, radical-, alt-, new-, populist-, or nationalist-right. Although this is not the place to offer precise definitions of all these terms, while keeping in mind their geographical variations, I only want to offer some brief guiding thoughts (for more clarification, see Golder 2016; Muis and Immerzeel 2017).

The most accepted differentiation is between the radical- and the extreme-right. Radical-right actors are positioned to the right of the traditional conservative party family[14] and while they might want to fundamentally change the outlook and make-up of society, they do so within a broad acceptance of the democratic rules of the game (Golder 2016, 478). Those rules can be changed, such as the often-demanded increase of direct democracy. Yet a full-blown assault on democratic institutions characterises the extreme-right only. Actors of the extreme-right often justify means by ends or work to exclude minorities from the democratic process. Based on this schema, I consider the AfD as belonging mainly on the former side of the dichotomy

[14] This doesn't mean that we should exclude traditional conservative parties or actors therein (or potentially any other party, really) from potentially belonging to the far-right spectrum. One of the main claims of this thesis is that the line is getting increasingly blurry and that this, indeed, did help the far-right in making their formerly considered extreme claims seem acceptable to parts of the population. Yet in terms of public relations and media strategies, their overall presentation etc., we can still distinguish between conservative and far-right parties.

and for reasons of personal preference will call them “far-right” as opposed to “radical-right”, with the two terms being synonymous for me. Regardless of which label we choose, one important thing to keep in mind is that there is a two-way relationship between what is considered radical and what is considered the “hegemonic centre”. Importantly, both are ‘contingent on historical, political and social developments’ (Mondon and Winter 2020, 58) and never fixed. Chapter 4 accounts for this process in detail, namely, how convictions that were previously considered radical became normalised (and the other way-round) in the integration debate in only a few years’ time.

One reason why I refrain from calling the AfD a *populist* far-right party – maybe surprisingly so given that I analyse its emergence from an Essex School perspective - is that the real threat and character of the party might be played-down by such a name. Within the public discourse too many parties are simply subsumed under the populist umbrella when it is actually xenophobic, nationalistic, or fascistic traits that dominate a movement. Naturally, there may be frequent inferences of “a people” made. But the people are not constructed in the way Laclau (2005a) understands it; they are more a consequence of nationalism rather than a determining factor for themselves. This is evident, for example, when a homogenous nation devoid of criminal foreigners is invoked. This is also the conclusion Kim (2017) draws in his in-depth look at the relation between the populist character of AfD and its ethno-cultural, anti-Islamic one; both are present yet also undermined through contradictory messages. Others have also argued to differentiate between a populist-vertical axis of “the elite” and “the people” and a nationalist-horizontal axis between an exclusionary in-group and a homogeneous out-group (see De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2017). While AfD’s discourse certainly plays both the up-down and in-out melody, I consider the latter more

substantial for their reality constructions and the way they "grip" subjects (see Glynos and Howarth 2007). Before I can describe my methodological approach in more detail, I now need to consider some more reflective points.

1.5 The Role of the Researcher

To start, as a researcher I need to be open about my own positionality, limitations, and biases. That is because we should not pretend that we can analyse the social world from a neutral, disinterested point of view. Instead, we have to acknowledge this "ontopolitical" dimension of every act of research, as William Connolly (1995, ch. 1) calls it. This relates to at least two points. First, I am a member of- and privileged in the scientific community as a white, straight, cis-male.[15] While I myself can do little to change it, I need to be continuously aware that this participation in an unequal field results in my easier attainment - for various reasons – of publications, citations, and prospective employment (see e.g., Sang 2018; Maliniak, Powers, and Walter 2013). Second, my research within the field of far-right studies is impacted by my perspective of an advocate for radical re-distributive policies, for a fundamental re-thinking of the relations between human beings and nature, and between humans themselves; for real equality and non-discrimination irrespective of sex, gender, ethnicity, religion, ability. In addition, I was drawn to critical theory during my bachelor's degree. This experience has, coupled with me being a German citizen, impacted my choice of PhD topic and the theoretical approach to analyse this topic, as well as the particular

[15] The field of far-right studies itself is to a worrying degree dominated by white males – though for understandable reasons. Not the least that making the study of racist, xenophobic, Islamophobic, and sexist, misogynistic far-right discourse and actors part of one's daily life can be hugely disturbing. Aurelien Mondon has pointed this out in a presentation on Whiteness in far-right studies in a panel on "Representation at the Margins" at the PSA Annual Conference in York, 2022.

aspects of the topic I consider worth looking at. Yet, this is not regretful and to be avoided, because the same holds true for every researcher.

When it comes to researching the far-right, special caution is called for. Not only is there a real danger of over-hyping the actual support far-right parties enjoy within countries (see Brown, Mondon, and Winter 2021), but also researchers might actually contribute to the legitimization of far-right ideas by supposedly claiming what the people “really want”, e.g., by uninformed recourse to public opinion polls (see Mondon 2022b). In a way, I am contributing to the first point, yet I deem my engagement warranted for the following reasons: I consider the recent changes within the elite discourse of politicians and the media in Germany to be not only interesting in and for themselves, but also because it helps me to make important claims about and develop specific academic fields. For example, within discourse theory regarding the utility of the concept of the horizon, and within media studies on the under-researched genre of political talk shows. To limit my participation in the hype I also do not want to explain the *real* reasons for the far-right vote itself - though the election of the AfD into parliament in 2017 provides me an important entry point - but rather account for the mainstreaming of far-right ideas within German society as a whole. This thought leads me directly to the status of my explanation before I turn to the concept of mainstreaming in more detail.

1.6 Doing Discourse Theory

As opposed to other approaches, discourse theory is ”problem” and not ”method” or ”theory”-driven and therefore wants to provide an explanation of ‘what is actually going on in the world’ (Shapiro 2002, 601). This is why I put so much emphasis on re-iterating the core of the puzzle: the suddenness of the arrival of far-right ideas in German

society, as well as the breaking down of the “silent consensus” by the media to not cover the far-right. In other words, ‘the problem-driven approach (…) begins with a set of pressing political and ethical problems in the present, before seeking to analyse the historical and structural conditions which gave rise to them, while furnishing the means for their critique and transgression’ (Howarth 2005, 318).

Another unique characteristic of the method of discourse theory pertains to the status or validity of a social science explanation. Ideally, in most mainstream social *science* approaches the researcher is supposedly neutral and disinterested, and their aim is to provide an all-encompassing and exhaustive explanation of social phenomena. Within certain broadly agreed limits, the goal there is to discover provable causal relations, underlying mechanisms, and correlations (Glynos and Howarth 2007) which can be measured objectively. A prime example in that vein is the modernization loser thesis causing far-right support (Betz 1993, 1994).

However, for discourse theorists such an endeavour and certainty is utopian. Therefore, at the start of the literature review, I consider Ellinas’ (2010, 6) worry about the lack of ‘definitive answers for the sources of Far Right support’ misguided. While I share his puzzling view that most explanations of far-right support are unconvincing, my thesis won’t endeavour to provide “definitive answers”. Though this does not mean it is not rigorous and not based on evidence. From my perspective, we will never be able to account for the *true* reasons why any single individual voted for the far-right or started to consider immigrants as a threat to the nation’s fabric. Instead, one way out for the discourse theorist is the strategy of bringing to light the conditions of possibility of a regime, practice, or event. This is exactly what I am trying to do: the research presented here asks how it was possible that a previous silent consensus to not vote for the far-right broke down and suddenly their discerned problems and solutions could

be considered as “real” problems or solutions. My explanation, then, competes with other plausible explanations and tries to go beyond them without claiming to have “solved” the research question once and for all. William Connolly puts this thought beautifully:

> I affirm the paradox of interpretation as a condition of possibility for this work, affirming that the perspective defended here will, even if it marshals considerable resources in its support, fall short of establishing its own necessity. It will be contestable, meaning that it is possible for others to support other readings of the [rise of the far-right], as they too work to defend the comparative plausibility of their accounts (Connolly 2002, 52).

In addition, I follow neither a deductive nor inductive mode of reasoning but rather a retroductive style (sometimes also called abductive), which lends itself well to my interpretivist, “history of the present” approach (see Foucault 1979). This is due to multiple reasons: first, as just mentioned, this line of reasoning does not aim prove what is the case, like deduction, or approximate what is the case, like induction, but instead conjectures what is the case (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 26). Second, and as I try to do in the theory chapter, for one of the proponents of this line of research, C. S. Peirce, theory can already (partly) form an explanation by drawing attention to lacks, inconsistencies, paradoxes, etc., in a theoretical account or putative explanation. Indeed, in unison with the problem-oriented investigation just described, retroduction ‘makes its start from the facts, without, at the outset, having any particular theory in view, though it is motived by the feeling that a theory is needed to explain the surprising facts’ (Peirce, quoted in Selg and Ventsel 2020, 231). That is why my theoretical framework draws from distinct seeming ideas: I take (1) Marxist insights on subjectivation processes via ideology, and couple them with (2) constructivist theories of political representation to avoid some shortcomings of the former. Then I read (3) discourse theory together with (4) psychanalysis to allow for an analysis of the conditions of possibility for the acceptance of contingent constructions of the social. I

support this with (5) media theoretical insights to suggest why some objects are affectively invested in and not others. Taken together, they provide the grounds for an explanation of how far-right claims can be seen as legitimate and no longer radical through mainstreaming processes.

Another feature of retroduction is that a final explanation of social phenomena is not only ontologically impossible, but it also involves a circular movement between theory, empirics (or "data", the "real world") and explanation where changes in each result in changes in the other (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 33–41). The development of my own research is a case in point. I finished my master's thesis[16] with the conviction that the world-making practices (via representative claims) of far-right actors are sufficient to explain their support. I concluded that this was where I needed to focus my attention, especially because the dominant accounts in political science focussed so much on structural and objective conditions. In short, I thought we needed to bring concrete actors back into the analysis. But while working on that task I realised that the acceptance of representative claims is methodologically difficult to account for, and the picture needs to be complicated with "mainstreaming" efforts by elite actors, without focussing solely on the far-right. Of course, this then changed the data I looked at, which I will present in more detail below, focussing more on public, elite discourse and less on far-right speeches and manifestos, even though I still draw on the latter. Generally speaking, the retroductive circle is, of course, still not closed and the explanation could evolve further, e.g., by taking social media into account, which then would necessitate a re-working of the theory or my conception of "identity", and so forth.

[16] Some sections in this thesis draw on thoughts developed first there, especially the section on language and far-right movements in this chapter, the literature review, and the section on media theory in the theory chapter.

1.7 Analysing Identity via Mainstreaming Processes

Retroductive analysis claims that one can account for a phenomenon under consideration through the positing of hypotheses, so long as the latter can plausibly be shown to be justified and true (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 28). But before I can turn to this positing and explaining my research strategy in more detail, I need to finally turn to the concept of “mainstreaming”, the process of which goes a long way in my analysis. When talking about mainstreaming, I completely take over the long-overdue and excellent definition by Brown, Mondon, and Winter (2021, 9) as ‘the process by which parties/actors, discourses and/or attitudes move from marginal positions on the political spectrum or public sphere to more central ones, shifting what is deemed to be acceptable or legitimate in political, media and public circles and contexts’. This focus on mainstreaming is useful as it allows me to thread the line between more narrow electoral success (which I stated was difficult to account for) and wider discursive changes within society, which are crucial for plausibly explaining my puzzle.

Looking at mainstreaming processes via this lens is further warranted because unlike other political parties that emerged suddenly in recent years, including the various European Green parties, the AfD in Germany started out as fairly centrist and only later moved to the far-right fringe, receiving more support the further it moved to the right. Such a development was seen as a surprise, because often the development of a (far-right) challenger party is to start on the fringe and slowly move towards an imagined centre (Golder 2016, 490). But researchers rightly put the spotlight on the process of how the centre gives legitimacy to and makes formerly radical perspectives seem acceptable as opposed to other mainstreaming approaches for which the vector is from the fringe towards the mainstream (Mondon and Winter 2020, 112). This was

also my own hunch at the beginning of my project, as I described above with my focus shifting from the actions of the far-right towards a closer look at the “centre” of society.

Therefore, in the analytical chapters of this thesis my main focus will be on elite and media discourse. My understanding of “elite” is purposefully kept wide to include as many privileged actors into the analysis as possible. This could be party politicians or government ministers, scholars and book authors, publications by ministries or fact-finding commissions. I consider all of these important as their powerful position in society allows them to impact public discourse with ease – also due to their easier access in disseminating media messages. With regards to the media, I will be looking at print media and televised media, both in their coverage over time of certain issues, such as the notion of *Leitkultur* (“leading culture”) in newspapers, how criminal immigrants have been talked about in TV news segments, or which topics televised political talk shows chose for discussion. But this will also be supplemented with smaller, vignette-style analyses, e.g., of magazine covers or illustrative talk show segments, which I consider as especially instructive in accounting for the mainstreaming process.

Similarly, bringing together a discourse theoretical ontology and vocabulary with the mainstreaming approach also helps to avoid one crucial shortcoming I discerned when it comes to empirical analyses of the acceptance of representative claims (see e.g., Joschko and Glaser 2019). I state in Chapter 3, that most likely there is no way to directly measure the success of each and every single claim within particular individuals. Instead, I agree with Benjamin Moffitt, who draws the attention away from flesh and blood individuals towards the public reception of claims, where ‘their coverage in the press, the way in which they are spoken about by those in public positions of power, the “official narrative” that builds around an event (…) gives it

meaning at least as much as whether “the people” who were spoken for in the claim are able to answer it or not’ (Moffitt 2017, 417). That is why I contend that we should rather pay attention to the conditions of possibility of how formerly extreme statements *can* make sense, how the consensus on not voting for the far-right *can* break down, how affective bonds towards a threatened nation *can* emerge, without claiming that for every single person this process is the same.

1.8 Research Plan and Chapter Overview

This thesis is structured to shed light on the process of (far-right) identity constructions via a mainstreaming lens and under a discourse theoretical ontology. I will now in more detail lay out the make-up of the analytical part of the thesis, state which hypotheses inform the different chapters and their respective foci, and detail how, taken together, they furnish a critical explanation of the rise of the far-right in Germany. It is important to emphasise that single insights from each chapter, such as the way topics dear to the far-right are debated in political talk shows, does not by itself explain the rise of the far-right. Rather, the overarching insights gained in the chapters together make up a persuasive explanation.

Chapter 4 looks at the developments within the German debate on the integration of migrants into society and does so by using the emergence of novel demands around a certain *Leitkultur* (“leading culture”) that emerged in the early 2000 as an entry point. The hypothesis here is that, if it could be shown that mainstream political actors were already beating the drum of a presumed cultural incompatibility between Germans and (especially Muslim) immigrants, and that a threat was constructed for the nation’s fabric, we can then assume that it was easier for parts of the population to be later interpellated by the even more extreme, ethno-nationalistic

rhetoric by the far-right. In discourse-theoretical words, I argue that the "horizon" on which far-right demands are inscribed and understood has changed. Two "dislocations" will aid me in making this claim. The first dislocation occurred when mainstream politicians started to consider integration as a problem to be solved (as opposed to an opportunity with challenges) during a public debate in 2010, following the publication of a best-selling non-fiction book, "Germany Abolishes Itself" (Sarrazin 2010). The second dislocation, I contend, was the moral panic created by political elites and the media after the violent events around the New Year's Eve in Cologne in 2015/2016. The way this episode was negotiated by elite actors mainstreamed many topics on the far-right agenda via affective attachments to a *Leitkultur*. Paradoxically, while devoid of positive meaning, the supposed need for a *Leitkultur* was used as an identity securing strategy that "abjected" the Muslim other from German society to not confront Germany's own structural problem of violence against women.

I discern a similar, though not identical, set of phenomena in Chapter 5. Here, the focus is on the construction and representation of immigrant crime through three different layers: the official crime statistics published by the government, elite discourse on the topic, and, finally, how the far-right formulates their claims on internal security. The latter have found success in making claims such as "the state having lost its monopoly on violence" and the underlying hypothesis here is that such statements are only able to "grip" subjects due to the massive prevalence of the topic in elite discourse. In contrast to the previous chapter, however, the issue under consideration, immigrant crime statistics, seems at first sight to be shaped to a lesser extent by the power of language than a topic like "integration", which invites a host of different – positive or negative – meanings. But it will be important to show here that even though official crime statistics seem like an un-ideological, bureaucratic way of accounting for what

happens in *reality*, this nevertheless does not mean that they don't lend themselves to distortive messaging and panic creation that *constructs a certain type of reality*. That is why it is so powerful a topic and, overall, one whose importance for far-right discourse has been underestimated. This chapter will be most balanced between the room it gives to the discussion of elite discourse and media practices, while Chapter 4 focusses more on the former and Chapter 6 on the latter.

It follows, the last empirical chapter, number 6, investigates a particular media genre, namely televised political talk shows. Millions of people watch them in Germany and they run most days of the week in the evening on public television. But the genre has come under scrutiny in recent times, mainly due to a suspected sensationalism and boulevardization, though this colloquial claim has not been researched scientifically yet. It is important to do so because the producers, just like the ministries producing the crime statistics, have denied taking part in the construction of reality and instead claim to represent reality *as it is* and discuss those topics that *the people are most concerned with*. The hypothesis here is that if it can be shown that the topic choice and framing strategies of political talk shows strongly resembles those of the far-right, then the latter's dooms-day rhetoric becomes legitimised and the previous social norm to not vote for them due to their perceived position on the extreme right fringe breaks down. To do so, I created a sample of 291 talk shows episodes from the four most watched programmes. The timeframe for the analysis is every talk show aired from the summer of 2015 until the election of AfD into the national parliament in September 2017. I conduct various statistical and content analyses including how many talk shows and on which topics the far-right gets invited to participate; which topics are debated in the talk shows; and, most importantly, with which sentiment the topics are discussed.

In the conclusion I offer some alternative examples I could have drawn on to reach similar results. I also note some limitations of my analysis and provide future avenues of research. Finally, I offer a *critique* of how we can avoid falling into the trap of far-right claims in the future.

2. Literature Review – Waiting for Identity

> That hundreds of books, articles, and dissertations have found it hard to come up with definitive answers for the sources of Far Right support is suggestive of the complexity of the phenomenon and the need to devise new conceptual tools to understand it (Ellinas 2010, 6).

2.1 Introduction

Having laid out the puzzle underlying my research question, I now turn to the approaches that have tried to account for it, before discussing my own explanatory schema in the next chapter. In this chapter, I am not only arguing that there is a gap in the literature, something left unexplained. But I also consider the literature review as one element of the explanation already; as having explanatory power. This is because I don't want to only argue that the approaches are lacking due to the reasons I discuss below, but that they have something in common which already indicates what we need to be looking for to furnish a satisfactory explanation. Namely, the all-important role of the construction of political identities. Hence, that explanation has already started and is ongoing as I engage with the literature, pointing out as I go along how my own account differs in crucial aspects.

The literature review is organised as follows. I have separated the different explanations that account for the rise of the far-right into four categories (see Table 2.1). I describe the approaches in general terms and how they relate to our puzzle. Importantly, all of them locate a "driver" of far-right support - the thing responsible for it - on a particular and privileged "Space" as I have called it below. For example, **psycho-social** accounts explain far-right support due a pathological condition. Here, an authoritarian character structure emerges in some individuals due to formative processes during - depending on the theory - childhood or adolescence. The next two

approaches want to explain the "demand" for far-right parties through an implicit allegiance to modernisation theory: authors making **socio-economic** processes responsible for increasing far-right support argue that globalisation and post-industrialisation have produced an identity crisis in some individuals, who are anxious about an increasingly uncertain future and hence fall easily for far-right appeals. Another theory explains the demand for far-right parties due to developments on the **socio-cultural** level. Here, the liberalization of values following the upheavals of the '68-protests did not sit well with parts of the electorate whose cumulated dissatisfaction results in a "silent counter-revolution". Lastly, on the "supply-side", **socio-political** accounts draw attention to the more active role political parties can play as makers of their own luck, within institutional constraints such as different electoral systems and thresholds and highlight the role played by a professional media.

Table 2.1 Overview of the literature

Paradigm	*Space*	*Identity*	*Period*	*Examples*
Psycho-social	Freud	Pathological condition	Conditioned during childhood/adolescence	1945-1990	Adorno et al. 2019 Altemeyer 1981; 1988; 1996 Crepaz 2020
Socio-economic	Durkheim	Demand-side	Produced through macro-structural developments under condition of anomie	1990-2000	Betz 1993; 1994 Minkenberg 2000 Butterwege et al. 2018
Socio-cultural	Beck et al.	Demand-side	Produced through macro-structural developments under condition of reflexive modernity	1990-now	Ignazi 1992; 2003 Inglehart and Norris 2016 Nachtwey 2017 Heitmeyer 2018
Socio-political	Downs	Supply-side	Adaptive, based on full information, rational actors	1990-now	Kitschelt 1995 Norris 2005

As is usually the case, this four-fold differentiation occurs mostly for analytical purposes and does not mean that they are clearly separated in actual research praxis. In fact, they often rely on each other, as socio-cultural explanations, for example, have developed in part due to the recognised shortcomings of socio-economic explanations.

While psycho-social accounts have been around the longest, they are now rarely considered as an explanatory variable for themselves, but mainly mentioned as a pathological condition upon which other effects occur. The timeframe when an explanatory strand experienced its strongest support is indicated in the column “Period”. Of course, there are always analysts who want to reclaim the importance of an approach and these periods are never final but represent when a field was developing the strongest.

Another category I imposed on the literature is what I term below a “Paradigm”. I hold that it is important, if we want to judge the success of a theory to explain far-right support, to pay attention to the assumptions it takes for granted. These assumptions are, besides the case of Freud for the psycho-social explanations, rarely acknowledged but nevertheless strongly inform these approaches. Due to that neglect, far-right scholars appear as if just looking out into the social world and describing to us what is happening. But paying attention to the intellectual forebears points us to certain shortcomings in the resulting explanations, as they take things for granted that may be questioned. In the case of Freud this is the existence of an unconsciousness that has been used to explain all kinds of repressed character traits of “far-right sympathisers”. For socio-economic explanations it is the presumption of society existing in a state of “anomie”, first to be found in Emile Durkheim (2002), where the multiple demands of globalised society overwhelm individuals. Regarding socio-cultural ones, the value changes they see happening occur mechanically based on a general reaction against modernity itself, as Beck et al. (see Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1994) have popularised under the notion of the “reflexive modernity”. Socio-political accounts sometimes acknowledge the Downsian character of their writing, but I question the assumption

that voters and parties act rationally, based on their knowledge where the other is positioned respectively on the electoral space.

Therefore, the main take-away of the literature review is that I discern in these approaches a misguided conception of political identities. The category of “Identity” is paramount for me to understand why far-right parties experience differing support in largely similar countries. But it is also necessary to explain the puzzle informing this dissertation, namely why the far-right managed multiple times to almost become an established, relevant political force in post-war Germany, only to fall back into irrelevance until the AfD at last gained rapid and stable support. I claim that the puzzle will never be answered without an understanding of how political identities change. Essentialised conceptions of political identities as deployed in the approaches below, are inferior to an understanding of political identities as constructed. Here, identities can change without recourse to the unconscious, objective macro-structural influences on identities, or when far-right parties are said to tap into “unaccounted demands” of a “neglected part” of the electorate. Instead, I propose in the theory chapter to follow to productively combine theories of interpellation and political representation with discourse theory and media theory to arrive at a better understanding of why and how political identities change. I do not intend to argue that we should disregard all the discussed explanations in their entirety, rather, that there is still something evading our grasp. We need an explanation that shifts the attention from objectively determinable facts towards a constructivist account of the production and maintenance of political identities, if we want to properly understand the rise and fall of the far-right in Germany. Otherwise we will not move beyond the situation where ‘’[o]nly a few accounts of far-right populism clearly explicate *why* or *how* successful populist leaders are able to find

“successful positions” and *why* most other attempts fail to do so’ (Muis and Immerzeel 2017, 921, my emphasis).

2.2 Psycho-Social Explanations

Psycho-social explanations of right-wing extremism have the longest tradition, even though their relevance has declined recently. They are not unimportant nowadays but make it into accounts mostly as “underlying conditions” and not as the main explanatory variable (e.g., in Heitmeyer 2018). In German scholarship in particular they still have a stronger standing, which might be explained due to an attachment to the Frankfurt School whose activities culminated in an important document of political psychology, namely its studies on authority (see Horkheimer 1987).

The main book in this series, *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno et al. 2019), was published in 1950, a decade after the members of the Frankfurt School had to flee from the Nazi terror and found refuge in the US (Jeffries 2017, ch. 9). They were wondering, if many individuals could be attracted to fascism, was there an underlying personality structure that makes some more likely to follow and deters others? In their famous opening statement they affirm this view: ‘the political, economic and social convictions of an individual form a broad and coherent pattern, as if bound together by a “mentality” or “spirit”, and (…) this pattern is an expression of deep-lying trends in his personality’ (Adorno et al. 2019, 1). Through the combination of clinical studies (interviews on experiences in childhood, relationship with parents and sexuality) and mass statistics (large sample group questionnaires), they tried to elucidate this “pattern” or “spirit”.

The theoretical background of the study lies in psychodynamic explanations, mainly influenced by Freud, where early childhood experiences are taken to account for discriminatory or racist behaviour, enabled by the unconscious (Monroe, Hankin, and Vechten 2000, 429; Martin 2001, 3). Adorno et al. (2019) used this theory, because they were expecting that their subjects might not state authoritarian character traits overtly, but that these had to be traced in projective answers by reference to the unconscious. This strand of psychology can be differentiated from social learning theories, which have also been applied to right-wing character traits, as we shall see below.

If it was assumed that a specific personality structure would make certain political identities and behaviours more likely (Monroe, Hankin, and Vechten 2000, 429), how was this measured? To this end, Adorno et al. produced the infamous F-scale, "F" referring to fascism. The goal was to tap into authoritarian, pre-fascist or ethnocentric attitudes, find correlations, and place respondents on the "High" or "Low" end of a spectrum, referring to the likelihood of falling for anti-democratic tendencies. Some respondents were then described in detail as part of the clinical studies.

The F-scale asked questions such as 'What this country needs is fewer laws and agencies, and more courageous, tireless, devoted leaders whom the people can put their faith in' (Adorno et al. 2019, 227). These items could be associated to different variables, which made up a single syndrome out of which the "authoritarian personality" emerged. It consisted of nine different variables: Conventionalism, Authoritarian Submission, Authoritarian Aggression, Anti-intraception, Superstition and Stereotypy, Power and "Toughness", Destructiveness and Cynicism, Projectivity, and Sex[17] (Adorno et al. 2019, 228). While not every single "High" necessarily needs to exemplify

[17] Understood as exaggerated concern with sexual "goings on".

all nine variables in equal strengths, they conclude that a combination of most of these can be found in individuals who are more likely to support far-right extremists. Adorno et al., unlike others discussed below, did not want to ascertain that a certain percentage of the population can be said to have this syndrome in them. Instead, they wanted to make the underlying connections visible and show that the trait existed in the first place. Hence, for the authors '[a] basically hierarchical, authoritarian, exploitive parent-child relationship (…) may well culminate in a political philosophy and social outlook which has no room for anything but a desperate clinging to what appears to be a strong and a disdainful rejection of whatever is relegated to the bottom (…) [and in] the formation of stereotypes and of ingroup-outgroup cleavages' (Adorno et al. 2019, 971).

Another important strand of scholarship emerged out of the pioneering work of Bob Altemeyer (1981, 1988, 1996) and his development of the right-wing authoritarian scale (RWA-scale), with which he attempts to overcome some methodological deficits of Adorno et al. and make more general statements about society. As opposed to the psychodynamic approach of his intellectual predecessors, Altemeyer follows social learning theory (see Bandura 1977). Instead of focussing on processes during childhood and the unconscious, social learning theory ascertains the importance of processes during adolescence for the formation of identities, such as punishment by parents and the observation of others.

For Altemeyer, "right-wing authoritarianism" consists of three elements: (1) Authoritarian Submission to the 'authorities who are perceived to be established and legitimate'; (2) Authoritarian Aggression 'directed against various persons (…) perceived to be sanctioned by established authorities'; and (3) Conventionalism, 'a high degree of adherence to the social conventions that are perceived to be endorsed

by society and its established authorities' (Altemeyer 1996, 46). He clearly took over the first three elements of Adorno et al.'s elaboration, but the understanding of the categories differs. For example, while the latter consider only aggression against non-conforming groups, Altemeyer enhances the category and looks at how "Highs" behave in replications of the famous Milgram experiment.[18]

In similarity to the F-scale, the RWA-scale also tries to measure and tap into the three main elements by way of asking about 30 different items. Altemeyer found strong correlations between all three categories. The RWA-scale could predict fairly well who could accept unfair and illegal acts by the government, is in favour of strong punishment for criminals (but is lenient when authorities commit the crime or the victims are disadvantaged groups) and has traditional views on the role of religion, sexuality and gender (Altemeyer 1996, 20–38). Based on his 25 years of research, Altemeyer concludes that 'we understand the people on the podium [of the Nuremberg rallies] a bit better now, just as we have developed an understanding of the adoring crowd before them' (Altemeyer 2004, 106).

How can those explanations shed some light on our research puzzle? Do we truly know now why some support far-right extremists while others don't? Are some people simply pre-determined to follow a strong leader once one emerges? How have the insights been applied to the German case in particular? To answer these questions, we must discuss first the methodological shortcomings of the two approaches, which influence their explanatory power.

[18] In the experiment, conducted first in 1961, a "teacher", located in a different room from the "learner," has to punish the former in the form of electric shocks, increasing in strength, for every wrong answer. Milgram wanted to find out how long "teachers" comply with following through with the experiment, even though they hear the (recorded) cries of pain. Altemeyer finds that "Highs" were significantly less likely to hold the authority (the experimenters) responsible than "Lows", but rather blamed the "teacher" or the "learner" and were more likely to conduct brutal shocks (Altemeyer 1996, 22-4).

The *Authoritarian Personality* has been criticised as 'probably the most deeply flawed work of prominence in political psychology' (Martin 2001, 1).[19] The problem with these kinds of approaches can be summarised by the unwarranted combination of a "nominalist procedure" with "realist interpretations". This resulted in the Berkeley group 'to "set up the board" in a way necessarily leading to confirmation bias' (Martin 2001, 5). Adorno et al. focussed only on the two extremes of "Highs" and "Lows" and disregarded the, potentially, large number of "neutral" individuals. If they then 'knew a priori that (nominally defined) Highs *were* authoritarians, the entire research project would be a waste of time. Their methods, then, assumed what they had set out to prove' (Martin 2001, 9). It has further been argued that the F-scale does not inquire about personality structures, as it is suggesting, but should instead be viewed as direct measurement of fascistic traits (Götz 1997, 400).

Another difficulty concerns their clinical approach to uncover supposedly hidden sentiments, which the individuals might not even be aware of themselves. Here, the researchers treat their two main categories completely differently. Martin (2001, 10) critiques that in the in-depth character studies for a "High" called Mack, his assertion that murder and rape were the worst crimes one could commit were taken as Mack's own desires, that he himself wanted to rape and kill. But the same standard was not applied when a "Low" named racial persecution and enforced militarism during peacetime the worst crimes; this did not count as suppressed racist and fascist drives. Whenever a "High" said something that might contradict his supposedly stable identity, this was taken as suppression of the opposite, while statements by "Lows" about

[19] In the discussion on the methodological flaws of the authors under consideration I rely heavily on the review of John Levi Martin, ""The Authoritarian Personality," 50 Years Later: What Lessons Are There for Political Psychology?" in *Political Psychology*. This is, in my limited estimate, a fair treatment of the literature in which I do not consider myself a specialist.

unacceptable desires was counted as proof of acceptance of personal shortcomings (Martin 2001, 10).

It might be asked what makes up an authoritarian or right-wing character anyway? For Altemeyer, more so than Adorno et al., “Conventionalism” is one of the key traits. But his operationalisation is doubtful in two ways: First, he considers someone “conventional” who is against premarital sex, which should be in his largely student population a rather unconventional stance. Second, why should conventional character traits result in an extreme right-wing personality (Martin 2001, 15–16)? It seems at times that all Altemeyer is explaining is actually conservatism. He anticipates this charge and asks ‘[w]hy should conservatives (without spilling over into authoritarianism) be prejudiced, have so many double standards, and be so likely to hurt people in a shocking experiment?’ (Altemeyer 1996, 48). But this may be explained by the set-up of these studies, both in the kinds of questions they ask and the kinds of people they are talking about. It could probably be shown that in fact large parts of the population are prejudiced in different ways and have double standards. What both approaches share is that they ‘attempted to construct a typology that would “get at” phenomena they believed they *knew* to take place’ (Martin 2001, 3, original emphasis). This leap of faith can also be discerned in other approaches that explain far-right support, such as the modernisation loser thesis and the replacement of economic by cultural cleavages, which will be discussed below.

One factor that is of importance throughout this review is how political identities are conceptualised. Due to their psychodynamic ontology, identity is considered to a large extent fixed for Adorno et al. They claim that ‘personality is a more or less enduring organization of forces within the individual’ and has ‘relative permanence’ (Adorno et al. 2019, 5; 7). Even if they acknowledge the possibility for change, this

does not occur in adult life when people engage with politics, because environmental influences are said to impact the individual stronger during early life stages (Adorno et al. 2019, 5–6). Altemeyer's attitude towards change is also unsatisfactory. He only considers change possible between different cohorts, who grow up during different times, as when the generation of '68 bear children and raise them according to their moral values (Altemeyer 1996, 89). But explaining identity change within an individual remains outside the scope of the RWA-scale.

An essentialised conception of identity can also be found in approaches that are not psycho-social in nature but fall back on these arguments. Kitschelt (1995, 7), for example, says that 'individuals with few cognitive skills, who are capable of only crude schematizations of social reality, are more inclined to opt for authoritarian modes of decision making'. The most at danger are those with "ego-weaknesses" [*Ich-schwache Charaktere*] (Stöss 2010, 53) or where "aberrations" [*Fehlentwicklungen*] occurred in early childhood socialisation (Stöss 1989, 231). Yet the most dramatic expression comes from Falter and Schumann (1988, 107–8), who state that many individuals 'tend to develop – unconsciously, of course – certain psychological defence mechanisms, such as cognitive rigidity, an affinity towards stability and clear-cut but inadequate interpretations of the world'. I argue that if we follow these lines of argument, we cannot understand how the far-right attracts such large numbers of followers and especially amongst those that Adorno et al. called "Neutrals".

Taking into consideration the German case, even if we assume that a concrete personality trait can indeed be found in a number of persons, there does not seem to be a causal link between a high and stable right-wing identification with far-right ideology and acting upon those dispositions (Stöss 1989, 234). With reference to our puzzle we can ask if some AfD voters have "authoritarian personalities", why did these

immutable characteristics not lead to far-right support earlier? This is the crucial question that authors following this line of reasoning for the rise of the AfD like Crepaz (2020) fail to consider.

Therefore, the most important question still requires an answer: why has the far-right in Germany spiked at a couple of intervals for a short time, ebbed down again, only to experience the strongest and most enduring support after 2013? If there is a causal relation between ethnocentric, conventional and submissive character traits and that these can be found in “traditional milieus” (Pfahl-Traughber 1999, 99), why is far-right support so dynamic in Germany?

Psycho-social studies ascribe great importance to processes of character formation during childhood or adolescence, respectively. This means that political actions or media exposure cannot influence the formation of identities. But for me, this is the most important part in explaining the far-right phenomenon. Hence, ‘[s]ociopsychological studies cannot explain why the salience of certain issues increases and why dispositions become more and more intense and politically salient. These limitations again show that socio-psychological research is not directly competing with or cannot serve as a substitute for sociological approaches to the study of political preference formation’ (Kitschelt 1995, 13). While I agree with the general sentiment of the statement, there are still issues worthy of discussion in more sociologically oriented approaches, to which I will now turn.

2.3 Socio-Economic Explanations

Modernisation theory forms the basis of the two approaches to be discussed below which belong to the demand-side of far-right support; the first focuses on economic

grievances and the second on cultural values. I will first deal with the former, which I summarize under the overarching category of the “modernisation loser thesis” (MLT) and can be said to be the most prominent demand-side explanation (De Cleen, Glynos, and Mondon 2018, 651).

The MLT sees the ‘emergence and rise of radical right-wing populist parties in the 1980s [as] a direct response to the transition from industrial welfare capitalism to postindustrial individualised capitalism’,[20] which results in ‘anxieties inevitably created by the new insecurities generated by the globalization of the market place’ (Betz 1994, 170–71; see also Stöss 2010, 50). Post-industrialisation supposedly produces in Western societies an underclass increasingly relying on “junk jobs” (Esping-Andersen 1990, 206), who are ‘permanently unemployed, underemployed, or marginally employed [and] are quickly turning into the losers of the accelerated modernization process (Betz 1993, 420). Whereas job opportunities were plentiful during the era of the Fordist mode of mass production, those with low or unfinished education and little means to enter re-training feel left out with the advance of post-Fordism and its highly specialised manufacturing. An “identity crisis” is ascertained in the losers of modernisation due to globalisation and post-industrialisation (Ellinas 2010, 6; Knigge 1998, 271), who are increasingly disconnected from society and search for their place of belonging. As more and more people enter even more precarious working conditions their anger rises, and they turn towards the far-right with their easy solutions for complex problems and readily identified scapegoats like immigrants.

I argue that this literature is closely related to Durkheimian sociology, even though this link is rarely acknowledged. In particular, many of the arguments made by

[20] It should be noted that Betz does not see the resurgence of the far-right as only caused by the losers of modernisation. Instead, he points to ‘an alliance between losers and winners of the present acceleration of the modernization process’ (Betz 1993, 421). But it is clear that for him the former are the main motor of change due to his focus on resentment, fragmentation and social conflict.

proponents of the MLT underlie a conception of society in anomie.[21] Originally named as one type of suicide in Durkheim's (2002) famous study, anomie nowadays refers to the breakdown of norms in the individual and society as a whole due to rapid progress. In this vein, reality is rendered too complex by modernization (Nachtwey 2017, 218) and individuals crumble under the weight put on them, making them susceptible to the far-right which openly acknowledges this anomie and provides answers to it. 'Today the politics of the radical right is the politics of frustration – the sour impotence of those who find themselves unable to understand, let alone command, the complex mass society that is the polity today' (Bell 2002, 42).[22] Similarly, Butterwege, Hentges and Wiegel (2018, 19) contend that '*the social cold current* [*Kältestrom*] *of an insecure, affluent society*'[23] is the main driver of AfD's success.

The MLT figures heavily in research on the far-right. It has been applied to the German case in particular (see Götz 1997; Lengfeld 2017; Minkenberg 1992), used for comparative studies on the European level (see Spier 2010; Bornschier and Kriesi 2013) or on the global scale (see Hadler 2004). As I will argue below, while the explanatory power of the MLT is seen as limited by empirical studies, it has nevertheless been reproduced in many publications, also on the political left (see

[21] For an overview of literature explicitly linking the resurgence of the far-right to anomie, see Eatwell (2017, 408–9).

[22] This explanatory category is usually taken to explain the rise of the far-right since the 1980s but has its forbearers in classical studies of political science and sociology that pertained to the analysis of fascism. Seymour Martin Lipset (1983) and Talcott Parsons (1942) were both concerned with how economic status and insecurity influence social classes and their sympathy with - or rejection of - authoritarian movements. For Parsons (1942, 140), rapid social change necessarily leads to a situation of anomie, because 'patterns of orientation which the individual can be expected to take for granted have disappeared'. This leads to a situation where 'society does not provide him with only one socially sanctioned definition of the situation and approved pattern of behaviour but with a number of possible alternatives, the order of preference between which is by no means clear'. He sees this as a regrettable situation, which puts an unsustainable burden on the individual. As we will see later, such a negative view on a situation that needs to be avoided is only one option among others. The Laclauian category of dislocation will provide us with a means on how to think of a situation in which previously tight links are loosened in a positive and productive way. It also points out that these times of "crisis" do not occur mechanically but have to be constructed.

[23] In this thesis, whenever a quote is written entirely in italics, this indicates a translation from German to English by myself. If I want to highlight a part of a quote, this will be done in bold to avoid confusion.

Fekete 2018; Mouffe 2005b, 2018). It is further generally accepted in journalism and politics itself[24] (Götz 1997, 394).

The first problem that emerges when we want to find out if "modernisation losers" are indeed responsible for the rise of the far-right is to qualify who we are talking about. Overall, the term "modernization losers" is used vaguely and is ill-defined (Minkenberg 2000, 182; Kriesi 1999, 407). One possible way out was attempted through a differentiation between an objective definition based on socio-economic characteristics, such as education, household income and employment and a subjective one based on the concept of "relative deprivation". Relative deprivation concerns an individuals' assessment of their current economic situation and outlook towards the future (Stöss 2010, 50). The subjective and objective categories have either been kept separated in the analysis (e.g., Götz 1997) or combined into one singular set of "modernisation loser" characteristics (e.g., Lengfeld 2017).

When the MLT is operationalised in empirical research and not just used as a rhetorical trope, the results are at most 'mixed and inconsistent' (Inglehart and Norris 2016, 4), if not outright rejected. The most evidence we find is that very high levels of education seem to act as a strong bulwark for supporting the far-right. But other than that 'it is not the least sophisticated and most economically deprived individuals who vote for the far-right', nor do 'economic marginalization and job insecurity' play a role (Bornschier and Kriesi 2013, 21; 26). For the case of Germany, the situation is the same. Götz (1997, 404) does not find evidence that the subjective category of "relative deprivation" can account for far-right support.[25] Similarly, Lengfeld (2017, 27)

[24] The concrete term "*Modernisierungsverlierer*" has even been used in a draft for the campaign strategy by the CDU for the election of 2017 but was dropped in a subsequent version. Nevertheless, references to those "left behind" and taking care of the "small people" are ubiquitous in German politics (Lengfeld 2017, 211–12).

[25] Westle and Niedermayer (1992), while also rejecting the objective dimension, nevertheless find support for the subjective deprivation explanation and conclude that REP voters are more likely to have

concludes that neither low education, being a worker, receiving low income or feeling disadvantaged by societal developments results in a higher probability to vote for the far-right. In their study on voters of the REP during the 1990s, Lubbers and Scheepers (2000, 76–77) provide evidence that a *rise* in the unemployment rate is related to far-right support, but *the higher* the unemployment rate the less likely REP votes become. More contextual research also goes against the hypotheses of the MLT. In a landmark study in Germany, Wilhelm Heitmeyer (1992, 163–70) examined how adolescents get drawn towards far-right extremism. He found that those with stronger right-wing attitudes had a more positive view on the self and society and were more likely to have a stable employment status than their less extremist inclined peers.

These analytical results from testing the MLT also confirm other observations. The far-right has been most resilient and received the highest total percentages of votes in two of Europe's richest countries, Switzerland and Austria. With their low unemployment rate and one of the highest GDPs per capita on the continent, the far-right was exceptionally successful where we would expect them not to be. The same holds regarding the high levels of education and strong welfare state in the Scandinavian countries, where according to the MLT we would also expect the far-right to do worse and which Betz (2002, 258) acknowledges.

Even if we assume that "modernisation losers" exist, why should they automatically fall for far-right appeals? If economic developments really produce a

---

fears for the future and perceive their own economic situation as bad. Rydgren (2007) argues that it is too early to say if there is support for the MLT and holds that more research on the feeling of deprivation is needed. The reason for me to not dive deeper into deprivation research is that I believe they are committing the same cardinal mistake as the MLT. Even if it could be show that modernization losers and relatively deprived individuals exists, this is assumed to result from objective, macro-structural processes. But I argue that we would have to find out how some people feel relatively deprived, while others in a similar situation don't. This points towards the need to understand the construction of feeling "left-behind" and "not taken care of", instead of assuming those a priori. Just because these feelings might develop against the backdrop of globalization does not mean that globalization is responsible for them. Yet this is assumed through the focus on the 'objective – mostly macrostructurally shaped – conditions that have increased grievances and discontent among the people' (Rydgren 2007, 247).

societal underclass of underprivileged individuals, whose formerly stable ways of live got unsettled, why do these strata not yearn for a sense of community and solidarity usually provided by the political left? Of course, this has not happened, but it is certainly also not the case that we can discern a causal link between falling behind in the modernisation process and voting for the far-right. This point is stressed by Hadler (2004) in his comparative study of “modernisation losers” in 30 countries around the world, where he does not find the connection between “losers of modernisation” and the far-right holding up everywhere. Even if we could objectively discern “losers of modernisation” and knew they would support parties on the right fringe, we still cannot explain why antecedent to the AfD, ‘the losers of modernization and the millions of jobless Germans have not been swayed by Far Right appeals’ (Ellinas 2010, 77).

I argue that scholars taking “modernisation losers” as responsible for the rise of the far-right have written ‘a name in the sky’ (Rancière 1999, 25, with a quote by Ballanche) and by that have brought them into being in the first place. To start, it is unclear if such a category even exists. The theory assumes that there is an existing subject, which can be fully identified as such. But, I argue, our universal understanding of “losers of modernisation” is a fantasmatic one. It presupposes an essentialised subject, in fact, speaks it into being. This process of naming proves especially strong, because even though empirical support for the theory is limited, the claims are nonetheless reproduced over and over. While we turn to the important category of the subject in more depth later, it suffices for now to mention that even within an assumed homogeneity of, say, far-right supporters, there are nevertheless vast internal differences. It seems that scholarship, for the sake of presenting a well-rounded story, forgets how contradictory and torn both individuals and the movements made up of them are.

I ascertain an inherent danger in using objectifying interpretations, which assume a direct link between social change and individual behaviour (Minkenberg 2000, 182). It risks neglecting the active power of political actors to shape political reality and citizens' experiences. That is why I agree with Beauzamy (2013, 187), when she says concerning the French case: '[p]oor socio-economic conditions and belonging to an increasingly unemployed working class do not mechanically lead to voting for the National Front, since these factors are mediated by social representations of one's situation'. In my view, those social representations do not emerge out of thin air nor are objectively determinable. Instead, they are produced and influenced by political actors and the media (Mondon and Winter 2020). Grand narratives, such as globalisation and post-industrialisation, develop gradually over time, but are taken to explain the rapid success of the far-right (Oudenampsen 2013, 194). Especially in the German case they cannot account for the wave-like pattern that we find with regards to far-right support. Indeed, even Betz (2002, 260) later conceded that the MLT is only partially able to explain the remarkable rise of the far-right.[26]

2.4 Socio-Cultural Explanations

Another sub-group of explanations tries to account for the rise of the far-right with modernisation theory, albeit in a different vein. Here, the argument goes that due to globalisation and post-industrialisation, economic or redistributive values lost in salience to the expense of cultural values centred around individual lifestyles. This new

[26] He further notes the irony that in the country where the MLT was discussed most prominently and structural conditions like mass unemployment and vast structural change due to globalisation were (supposedly) present, a longer term electoral far-right force was nevertheless absent (Betz 2002, 259).

cleavage structure then got exploited by the far-right, who took up the supposedly unaccounted for demands in the population.

While many authors have rejected the MLT, especially in its objective variant and, to a lesser extent, in its subjective one, those same scholars often turn towards another interpretation of modernisation theory. Now, the far-right is supported not by "victims" but "opponents" of post-materialist, global, emancipatory, and multicultural modernisation processes (Stöss 1995, 127; see also Norris and Inglehart 2019; Rippl and Seipel 2018). In similarity to the previous approach, Bornschier (2018, 218) even calls them "losers of cultural modernization". What these explanations unites is that they are implicitly informed by the idea of "reflexive modernity", a term popularised by Ulrich Beck (1992) that was later the object of a published three-way exchange between Beck, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash (1994). It refers to processes that ensued after modernity had to deal with its own modernising effects. This is not due to a drawback or contradiction of modernisation processes, but due to its very success. Hence, the term "reflexive".

Reflexive modernity is a very rich concept and even Beck, Giddens and Lash use it in slightly different ways. But what it shares with explanations accounting for the rise of the far-right is the way social change is conceived. Sweeping developments enter through the backdoor, completely altering our social relations, but going unnoticed by social scientists at first and uninfluenced by political actors alike (Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1994, 3). For them, the 'transition from the industrial to the risk period of modernity occurs undesired, unseen and compulsively in the wake of the autonomized dynamism of modernization', through a 'unreflected, quasi-autonomous mechanism' (Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1994, 5; 6). I want to show that this quasi-

ontological consideration of change is also present in socio-cultural explanations regarding the far-right.

But first let us turn to the actual content of the value change. Ronald Inglehart paved the way for a vast amount of research after him. This scholarship is strongly survey based, as 'the central focus is on things that exist within individuals, and these things can best be measured with survey data' (Inglehart 1977, 4).[27] His starting point is the moment when 'people are safe and have enough to eat' (Inglehart 1977, 22). From the 1970s onwards, industrialised societies experienced a change in the basic structure of belief systems. Materialist values and the demand for economic and physical security got replaced by post-materialist values, structured around individual rights to self-expression and the acceptance of a bourgeoning number of lifestyles (Inglehart 1997, 4; 1971, 1016). This change is particularly prominent in younger cohorts, who lack the experience of war and enjoy higher levels of education. For them, questions around gender identity and LGBT rights, conceptions of the family beyond the "core family", secular values and ethics, environmental protection, open-mindedness towards foreigners and multicultural lifestyles become increasingly more important (Inglehart and Norris 2016, 13). Inglehart (1971, 1977) called this process the "silent revolution".

But, according to some, this assessment leaves out another important process. Piero Ignazi criticises that Inglehart focusses only on value change on the left side of the political spectrum and that therefore a stronger support for leftist parties, who stand for post-materialist values, is expected (see Inglehart and Flanagan 1987, 1299). Instead, Ignazi (1992, 2002) asks the question of why we find an increasing number of voters for the far-right? His answer is a "silent counter-revolution" by those parts of the

[27] In fact, Ronald Inglehart is the founding president of the World Values Survey, the data of which he used for his major, over 40 countries encompassing, comparative study (Inglehart 1997).

electorate that do not agree with the cosmopolitan and multicultural developments. The process occurs “silent” because relatively large parts of the population disagree with the progressive turn by society, yet their opinion does not find a political outlet at the start. Far-right parties slowly realise the growing discontent and mobilise accordingly, as the other parties converge to the ever more progressive centre (Mouffe 2005b). This “cultural backlash” is by now firmly established in the literature; Norris and Inglehart (2019) have even used it in the title of their latest publication. Cas Mudde (2018) has also taken on the term “silent counter-revolution”.

In the German context, Wilhelm Heitmeyer draws strongly on theories of anomie during “unsecure” [*entsicherte]* times in his explanations of AfD’s success (Heitmeyer 2018, especially ch. 4 and 6); indeed, his decades long work on extremism was strongly influenced by Beck’s notion of risk society and a privileging of modernism’s societal disintegration mechanisms (Pfahl-Traughber 1999, 102). Heitmeyer combines elements of all three explanations I have discussed so far yet always a theme of crisis is present.[28] Therefore, it is not surprising that in his account the construction of political identities is strongly lacking. Instead, in a completely actor-less process somehow ‘*millions of people feel threatened*’ and far-right actors draw those millions towards them because of the latter’s ‘*authoritarian cravings*’ (Heitmeyer 2018, 11;16). Due to the “ambivalence of modernity”, as he calls it, there are ‘*shifts in large parts of the population in their attitudinal patterns. Those changes stayed latent at first, were rarely regarded by the political and media elite*’ but ‘*those processes led finally from 2013 to*

[28] He even discerns “crises of integration”, in the plural, and especially when it comes to believers of Islam in Germany. This rightwards turn in the integration debate and the construction of various crises when it comes to integration like the threat of the Muslim male other for German women and German values *tout court* and how “many people silently rebel” against those “developments” will be discussed in chapter 4. In Heitmeyer’s defence, he also takes into account the general move towards the right by the political elites, specially within the conservative CSU (Heitmeyer 2018, ch. 12). Yet, he though focuses mainly on the time from 2017 onwards while I will claim that the mainstreaming of far-right positions occurred earlier.

the rise of movements like Pegida and the AfD' (Heitmeyer 2018, 170). Sarah Wiliarty (2021, 147; 167) is also a defender of the "silent counter-revolution" thesis, though in Germany it supposedly occurred with a lag but then can be made responsible for the rise of AfD. The flag post for the "cultural backlash" thesis as a reason for AfD success is held up by Lengfeld and Dilger (2018) by reference to SOEP (Socio-economic panel) data due to the more communitarian as opposed to cosmopolitan attitudes of AfD voters, a hardly surprising result. A strong desire to have a demand side theory account for the rise of the far-right shows through when Rippl and Seipel (2018, 250) call a study by Lengfeld that failed to show evidence for AfD success due to the MLT a 'surprising result'. Instead, they also make out the cultural backlash thesis as the strongest explanation for AfD support.

I am not claiming that these processes do not occur at all; it is undisputable that societies around the world have accepted previously taboo gender identities, traditional ties to religion or the patriarchal household are loosening, and rising levels of immigration change the make-up of social worlds. It is also the case that a variety of people, for a variety of reasons, disagree with these developments. But I am questioning (1) the assumed causal links connecting this form of discontent with the far-right, (2) that these changes supposedly occur mechanically without the influence of actors and, like the MLT, that (3) even if true, the "cultural backlash thesis" still can't account for the wave-like pattern of far-right support in Germany.[29]

We can start by considering the status of the change that Ignazi is envisioning. According to him, the "silent counter-revolution" broke out because of 'an *underground*

[29] The overview I have presented here is not very different in character from the failure of orthodox Marxism to understand the social indeterminacy surrounding the assumed unitary position of the workers. Compare the "mistake" Marxists made according to Laclau and Mouffe and the shortcoming I discerned: 'Diverse subject positions are reduced to manifestations of a single position; the plurality of differences is either reduced or rejected as contingent; the sense of the present is revealed through its location in an a priori succession of stages' (Laclau and Mouffe 2014, 15).

melting pot of attitudes and sentiments [that] included the emergence of new priorities and issues not treated by the established parties' (Ignazi 1992, 6, my emphasis). The "underground" metaphor is used multiple times as the origin for change and is usually taken to infer hidden developments out of sight for everyone until the far-right detected the holy grail. 'The *underground change in value priority*, which we have labelled a "silent counter-revolution", found its *effective and authentic interpreters* only when new political entrepreneurs in tune with these non-material rightward demands emerged by exploiting a favourable structure of opportunities' (Ignazi 2003, 202, my emphasis). Attitude formation is a complicated process and will be dealt with in more detail later, but I question this depiction of value change. My discourse theoretical ontology takes great care to point out the radical unfixity of social relations, the non-necessary character of political identities and the importance of the practice of articulation (see Laclau and Mouffe 2014). I argue that a "cultural backlash" does not occur in a vacuum, but that we can shed light on the process of value formation before they "emerge from the underground". This will be the focus of Chapter 4 on the developments within the German integration debate.

However, the process of taking up the unaccounted demands occurs mechanically for Ignazi. He relates the rise of the far-right in the 1980s mostly to questions around immigration and security. This was possible due to '[t]he inability of the established political parties to provide an answer to this problem in due time' (Ignazi 1992, 23–24). But I hold that we must discursively analyse how a "problem" is constructed in the first place, demanding a "solution" that was then "not provided for. The most we can take from Ignazi is that he acknowledges that new issues around immigration, national identity, and security did not come up organically, but were introduced by traditional conservative parties. Nevertheless, he holds that those

‘parties did not provide satisfactory answers for that electoral constituency, which, while limited in size, was particularly concerned by such issues’ (Ignazi 2003, 203). There remains a lot to be said on how those issues emerged in the first place and I specifically want to ask the question why some parts of the population were out of nowhere especially concerned with them. In this regard, constructivist theories of political representation will be useful, which question that the interests of the represented prefigure the act of representation.

Another clue towards the non-necessity of the “cultural backlash” pertains to the idea that even if in modernity traditional ties and communities get dissolved in an ever-increasing individualisation process, this could also lead to a surging demand for communal ways to identify. Just because inclusionary mechanisms are disappearing, this does not automatically require exclusionary ones to emerge (Götz 1997, 398). Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that as exposure to globalisation generates job insecurity, preferences for welfare state expansion are also rising and therefore a demand for left leaning parties (Walter 2010, 405). Negri (2019, 162; see also P. Marx and Picot 2013) similarly finds that precarious workers’ voting behaviour is more linked to the economic dimension than to the cultural. One could make the objection now that it is other sectors of the population that revolted against the post-materialist society, but Ignazi (2003, 202) especially emphasises the self-employed and manual workers as those social strata driving the “cultural backlash”.

Inglehart and Norris point out that ‘the impact of populist parties has been exaggerated’, yet also claim that ‘the classic economic Left-Right cleavage in party competition is overlaid today by a new Cultural cleavage dividing Populists from Cosmopolitan Liberalism’ [sic] (Inglehart and Norris 2016, 2; 3). Here, similarly to the MLT, complex societal processes are rendered singular. It is assumed that the

backlash is fully transparent and recognisable. But this forgets that far-right supporters are ‘far more ambivalent with regard to a range of basic social values than theory would concede’ (Betz 1994, 175). I believe this to be a shortcoming of the dominant survey methodology. While they can claim that change over time regarding certain values is happening (and I am not saying it doesn’t), they forget that within an individual multiple and contradictory values can be found.

For me, it is not essential properties of someone’s identity that makes them support the far-right, but certain parts of the identity can take priority over others, activated by political actors and the media. An example by Ivarsflaten (2005, 467) shows this point. She imagines a member of the working class who has continuously been supportive of both strict immigration and affordable kindergartens. The ranking of these issues then influences the electoral vote, which could be cast for a far-right or a left leaning party. Importantly, if the desire for stricter immigration begins to supersede the wish for affordable kindergartens, no change in issue position occurred; only the importance attributed at the moment of the vote changed.

We have seen that strong anti-immigration views have always existed in German society. Hence, ‘[i]t is important not to assume that there has been a major recent attitudinal shift’ and the discussion shows that ‘[t]he relationship between political belief and action is complex’ (Eatwell 1994, 318). But this is not acknowledged by proponents of socio-cultural explanations, for whom the issue change is objectively discernible and sufficient to explain far-right support. I do not think that these transformations occur mechanically and economic values did not just happen to be replaced by cultural values. I agree with Yilmaz (2016, 62) when he says: ‘[p]olitical analysts have the tendency to see the disappearance of class identities as the result of the macrostructural changes and prominence of cultural cleavages as a “natural”

consequence of structural changes'. Instead, I posit that we must ask the primary question on how certain issues get constructed as problems in the first place, how answers are deemed either sufficient or insufficient and then can (possibly) ascertain value change, or at least a change in value priority. Framing theory and the role of political talk shows on issue salience will shed light on this process in Chapter 6. But first we need to turn to the supply-side in the last set of explanations for far-right success.

2.5 Socio-Political Explanations

While the demand-side theories emphasise conditions that make far-right parties appealing, supply-side ones consider political actors more as makers of their own luck. They have received fewer attention overall (Mudde 2016, 4; Norris 2005, 3), but share the intuition of this thesis: socio-economic and macro-structural variables can't explain far-right support. The dominant political science literature often wrongly assumes that far-right parties are simply dependent variables, at the mercy of structural factors (Mudde 2007, 293). Instead, supply-side explanations focus on the concrete political reasons for far-right success and pay more attention to actors: either established parties, far-right parties, their leaders and the background conditions within these work. Hence, and to be congruent with the general wording in this review, I call them socio-political explanations. The crucial question here is, if there are novel political actors, under what conditions are their chances of success high and what inhibits success? How does the socio-political literature relate to our puzzle? Can this explanations account for the wave-like phenomenon in Germany?

To start, it is worth emphasising that this branch, sometimes explicitly, most often implicitly, draws on a Downsian rational choice framework. Based on an economic theory for the study of politics and individual behaviour (see Downs 1957), political parties are assumed to position themselves on the electoral space where they expect to make the most gains. Parties are in a competition to recruit qualified personnel, need to minimise internal disagreement, use state finance and donor money efficiently, and stay away from financial or corruption scandals. This ontology is best exemplified by a representative statement: 'Even if a *strategic opening* for a new rightist party exists, right-wing *political entrepreneurs* must be able to build organizations and to *design* the appropriate appeal that *seizes the moment* and *exploits the strategic weakness* of the existing parties' (Kitschelt 1995, 14, my emphasis).[30] It is further assumed that parties and voters observe each other constantly, have full information about preferences and update their respective strategies accordingly (Kitschelt 2018, 170).

One domain usually seen as playing an important role in facilitating or curtailing the rise of the far-right are election rules and thresholds to parliaments. The hypothesis is that challenger parties fare better in proportional voting systems than in disproportional ones because voters consider the chances of their preferred party to enter parliament and, if need be, change their vote to not see it wasted. The

[30] Formal rational-choice analysis and the acknowledgement of using such a framework is surprisingly almost completely absent in research on far-right extremism. While I think that rational choice theory is not the solution to the problem by any means, its neglection is telling and points to some issues discussed above. In the dominant accounts, attraction to far-right parties is either attributed through psychological factors, leading to distortion and submissiveness. Individuals are believed to have gotten off the right track and their extremism 'was interpreted as a safety valve that let off steam, but accomplished little in the way of solving their problems' (Wintrobe 2002, 24). Or globalization produces irrational anxieties, leading individuals to vote against their fundamental interest. They are living in a societal state of anomie where rationality is absent, maybe even impossible. But it is interesting that one of the few rational choice accounts touches upon a concern that is very dear to me – the construction of social reality. That is, far-right extremists might not see themselves as extremists but perceive themselves and their *modus vivendi* as the norm. Additionally, what is extreme at one time, might be considered a centrist position later (Evans 2004, 114).

paradigmatic example in this regard is the UK with its restrictive voting system and historically low far-right support (Hawkins, Read, and Pauwels 2017, 274).

Cross-country studies have shown that this conclusion might be premature. Arzheimer and Carter (2006, 432) find that the disproportionality of the electoral system increases the odds of voting for the far-right, while van der Brug et al. (2005, 568) do not find any support for the thesis that a proportional electoral system facilitates the entry of the far-right into parliaments. These findings are confirmed in a study by Pippa Norris on the far-right vote in 36 countries from 1990-2004. She found that there was virtually no difference in the percentage of votes gained in proportional or disproportional electoral systems (Norris 2005, 112).[31] When findings support the hypothesis, they do so only in a narrow way. Golder (2003, 461), for example, found evidence that far-right parties profit from larger district magnitude and a higher number of upper tier seats allocated, which is indeed the case in Germany with 50 percent of the seats. But it would be fair to say that the hybrid electoral system in Germany is not particularly inviting, nor particularly restrictive and the same applies to the electoral threshold of 5 percent. Additionally, if we could ascertain a definite influence of the 5 percent threshold on the lack of far-right votes, as Givens (2005, 100; 125–31) does, we are left with the puzzling result that once far-right parties managed to gain representation in state parliaments, in almost all cases their support shrank the next election (pre-AfD), even though voters could see that their votes would likely not be wasted (Bornschier 2012, 125). Hence, both with regards to Germany (see Bornschier 2010, 166) and from a comparative viewpoint, there is very little influence of

[31] The only major influence lay in the allocation of seats. In proportional systems, the far-right was able to secure more than double the number of seats than in disproportionate ones. This is, of course, a significant finding. But more so for analyses concerned with, say, far-right influence on policy or the effect of the far-right on coalition building. Instead, I want to ask the question of why individuals support far-right parties at specific moments in time and the evidence discussed suggests that the voting system does not play a role for the party choice.

institutional frameworks on the support of far-right parties and can't explain the uneven success (Norris 2005, 12; see also Kitschelt 2007, 1193; Beauzamy 2013, 183).

But most research in the socio-political dimension concerns the political opportunity structure,[32] often analysed via the convergence or polarisation of mainstream parties, which influences far-right success. Here, traditional conservative parties are usually the object of interest, but their role is not clear. One could argue that the more a conservative party moves towards the centre, then this creates room for far-right parties on the abandoned space. But if a conservative party polarises to the right, it can lend legitimacy to far-right positions and appear only as a weaker alternative, pretending to care about similar issues to catch a wider net of voters. It is also sometimes claimed that the developments on the demand-side create opportunities for far-right parties (e.g., Rydgren 2007, 253), a view that I mostly reject.[33]

The paradigmatic work in this regard is Herbert Kitschelt's (1995) hugely influential study "The Radical Right in Western Europe". He proposes that the major axis of political conflict has changed from a left-right dimension in terms of the Keynesian welfare state during the Cold War to one with a left-libertarian and right-authoritarian dimension. If mainstream left and right parties converge and moderate conservatives are part of the government for an extended period of time, this then '*creates the electoral opening for the authoritarian Right that induces voters to abandon*

[32] Drawing on Arzheimer and Carter (2006, 422), I understand by the term "political opportunity structure" the "openness" or "accessibility" of a system for political entrepreneurs.

[33] Socio-political accounts do not disregard demand-side arguments but in fact rely on them as well. We can see this when Kitschelt perfectly summarises every major point mentioned above: 'Societal change in contemporary capitalism has increased the salience of political partisan appeals to economically rightist positions favouring market allocation over political redistribution of economic resources. At the same time, these positions support authoritarian and paternalist modes of collective decision making in the state, the corporation and the family. The structural change of society that has made possible the rise of the extreme Right is the transition to a postindustrial economy in which citizens' political preferences and salient demands differ from those that prevailed in the Keynesian Welfare State of the post-World War II era'. But for socio-political accounts this has to be supplemented with 'a theory of political institutions and strategic choice within party systems and party organization' (Kitschelt 1995, 1–2).

their loyalty to established conservative parties' (Kitschelt 1995, 17, original emphasis). But the far-right can also fall back on what he considers the "winning formula" in Western Europe: a combination of market-oriented, bureaucracy rejecting neoliberalism to appeal to small business owners and farmers and xenophobic authoritarian positions to attract the working class (Kitschelt 1995, 19; 275).[34]

The empirical evidence for the convergence thesis has been mixed. One important factor might be the existence of grand coalition governments of the two major parties in a political system. Arzheimer and Carter (2006, 434) indeed found a substantial effect for far-right support when a grand coalition was present. Van der Brug et al. (2005, 563) present evidence that movement towards the centre of the major conservative party facilitates far-right support. But there are also voices arguing for the opposite case. Mudde (2007, 301) contends that a polarisation of the main parties leads to fewer possible coalition options and therefore to an increasing role for the far-right. Lastly, Norris (2005, 194–96) claims that both Kitschelt's and van der Brug et al.'s theses do not hold up, that the far-right flourishes neither when there is a small difference between left and right or when the traditional right is closest to the centre.[35]

[34] The "winning formula" argument has been heavily critiqued, mainly on the basis that far-right parties are less neoliberal than Kitschelt would think and instead more nativist, but also that they are successful on many different platforms (Rydgren 2007, 245; see also Eatwell 2000; for the German case see Art 2006).

[35] A variant of the convergence thesis is also discussed in the democratic theory literature, albeit from a different viewpoint. Here the convergence does not concern a movement towards the ideological centre from established parties, but more the type of politics they engage in. Chantal Mouffe has argued throughout her work that the conflictual dimension of politics has receded, and the current type of democracy is centred around creating consensus. This results in a lack of alternatives, because of which far-right parties can flourish (Mouffe 2005b, 55, see also 2005a, especially ch. 4). But I disagree with Mouffe's assessment that a *cordon sanitaire* strategy is always bound to be unsuccessful, because this would only raise the appeal of anti-establishment parties and reinforce their outsider rhetoric (Mouffe 2005b, 59). As I will discuss later, David Art (2006) has produced an enormously convincing argument where the *cordon sanitaire* established by the media and political parties was a major factor why the German far-right was not successful for such a long time. The question that remains to be answered is if the *cordon sanitaire* got lifted and if so, whether that is responsible for the continuous success of the AfD.

The major issue at stake in most socio-political accounts is how mainstream parties respond to the challenge put forward by far-right parties, as the latter threatens to become a viable electoral alternative. But what is rarely considered is that established parties can politicise issues for short-term electoral gains without having been forced to do so by emerging far-right parties. The key term here is that established political actors can “prime” certain issues as important ones that demand a solution. This helps the far-right in two related ways (see Bale 2003, 76). First, it makes what was previously considered as excessive far-right rhetoric an acceptable option for voters, which it may not have been before. Second, campaigning on immigration, foreigner crime, and welfare abuse increases the salience of these issues due to the “authorised” and respected outlets from which they come. With regards to voters, this process ‘help[s] determine not so much their political preferences but the basis on which their political choices are made’ (ibid.). When considering political identities as constructed, then one identity of an individual is not replaced by another, say a working-class social democratic one by a working-class authoritarian right-wing one. Instead, in a non-essential and reversible way, the only thing that changes is the importance attached to certain issues.

This argument then points not to a “silent counter-revolution” of hidden, macro-structural processes, but to a complex, yet traceable process with concrete actors. In my research I want to shed more light than is currently done on the process of how established parties politicised certain issues *without having been compelled to do so*, as is usually assumed, and through that paved the way for far-right parties. In other words, I will argue that a process of mainstreaming of far-right viewpoints occurred in Germany *before* a threatening far-right party existed; this being the main difference to other countries like France or the UK (Mondon and Winter 2020). One significant

catalyst might have been the publication of a controversial book in 2010 called *Deutschland schafft sich ab* (Germany Abolishes Itself) by Thilo Sarrazin (2010). In the heated debates that followed the publication, virtually all political parties conceded to the failed immigration model or that foreigner crime has to be taken seriously. This made certain kinds of statements completely acceptable, whereas earlier they might have been unthinkable.

Another commonsensical argument nowadays is to consider the success of far-right parties as influenced greatly by their charismatic leadership personnel. Backes (2018, 471), for example, writes: 'Successful right-wing populist parties in Austria and Switzerland are clearly leader-focused, and the attractiveness and charisma of people in the party leadership play no small part in the parties' success. In Germany, both the extreme and the radical right lack such attractive personalities'. Indeed, the leadership argument is almost impossible to bring to bear on the German case, given that the AfD changed its party leader pairs (once it was a triplet) four times between 2013 and 2019. But what is more and discredits most approaches that ascribe importance to charismatic leaders for far-right success, is that the literature rarely explicates what "charisma" actually entails, leading to a tautological understanding of this complex term. I contend that there seems to be a tendency to ascribe "charisma" *qua* success and not the other way-round. Unsuccessful parties are then said to lack charismatic leaders.

Therefore, it comes as no surprise that van der Brug and Mughan (2007) did not find evidence for "charismatic" leaders to influence ballot choices more than party leaders, who are usually not considered charismatic. Neither Geert Wilders nor Pim Fortuyn disproportionately affected the electoral fortunes of their parties, whereas "uncharismatic" politicians, such as the successor to Pim Fortuyn, Matt Herbert,

actually received similar affect scores by the public (van der Brug and Mughan 2007, 44).

Roger Eatwell continued to defend the concept even after recognising the criticisms levelled at it by van der Brug and others, acknowledging that the previous, loose understanding of charisma is insufficient. In his new conception of a charismatic leader four characteristics are combined: a radical mission, personal presence, symbiotic hierarchy and Manichean demonization (Eatwell 2018, 253–57). This is a more substantial conceptualisation, yet I find it questionable when he mentions the 'targeting of enemies' 'who in recent decades are nonwhite "immigrants"' [sic] (Eatwell 2018, 256) as a core trait of a charismatic leader. To me, it seems that he mostly characterises a right-wing strongman, which in my understanding is not synonymous at all with charisma. This is a clear example of an unwarranted conflation that also often takes place in public debates when "populism" is made synonymous with "right-wing populism" (see Brown and Mondon 2021). Eatwell has further linked his charisma thesis with mix of a psychological and social anomie accounts, when he says that voters are 'attracted to charismatic sources of authority (…) who seem to provide an authoritative guide to the dangerous future' (Eatwell 2000, 415). This is, for reasons given above, also a view I would reject.

In sum, socio-political accounts move in the right direction in developing a satisfactory explanation of far-right support. By taking the agency of political actors into account, they are more suited to explaining the diverging pattern of far-right support between different countries and within countries. The general direction towards which the opportunity structure points is promising in the interplay between extreme and mainstream parties, yet, the way they conceive of change and political identities is too simplified, as they assume voters and parties are rational actors, who know each

other's stances and adjust their voting or campaigning strategy accordingly. They 'assume a highly simplified cognitive process in which issue positions (…) are constantly at the forefront of voters' and politicians' calculations' (Hawkins, Read, and Pauwels 2017, 271). Through this focus, unintended consequences are ignored, for example when mainstream conservative parties politicise controversial topics without having been compelled to do so by far-right challengers. Lastly, in most approaches the role of history and the political culture of a country is not considered, even though they play a part in the political opportunity structure. This neglect is, I believe, due to the fact that they can't easily be modelled by quantitative and comparativist research strategies, which heavily dominate this line of inquiry. In general, within this literature, public opinion is considered the holy grail but, ironically, the way public opinion comes about is not problematized but taken for granted (Brown, Mondon, and Winter 2021, 2). Indeed, whereas for qualitative approaches, identities are not considered as essential 'carriers and makers of meaning'. Instead, 'meanings and contexts (including an individual's sense of identity)' (…) are not fixed, constant objects with immutable traits. Rather, meanings and identities are fluid and changeable' (Luborsky and Rubinstein 1995, 100; 99).

2.6 Conclusion - The Fixity of Identities and the Politics of Crisis

One communality in the mainstream accounts are the conceptualisations of crises and threats. 'It is said that times of crisis are a boon for right-wingers. German history shows that the rise of right-wing parties is deeply linked with social and economic crisis. Exploiting social fears of voters is the main business of far-right parties and social movements' (Jaschke 2013, 33). While I agree that in times of crisis major social

change *can* happen, it is not certain *in what way* a crisis is negotiated and what *counts as crisis* in the first place. These are developments that can be traced from a discursive viewpoint and it is not the case that, say, during an economic crisis, individuals automatically "fall for" the far-right. For many authors, the far-right is only considered to be the passive profiteer from crises; seizing the moment; making use of them (see Stöss 1989, 239). Hence, there is a need to take the performing of crisis by concrete actors seriously. Some scholars have done so, but then the focus was often on the far-right themselves as the contributing party. For example, Moffitt states that 'while crisis may present an effective stage for populists, it is often the case that populists must play an important role in "setting the stage" themselves by promoting and performing crisis' (Moffitt 2016, 9). This is a correct view, however, we also need to take into account conjunctures where the mainstream itself – for a variety of reasons – performs crises.[36] Otherwise we are complicit in hiding the agency of the mainstream in the rise of the far-right. We will see this especially in Chapter 4 regarding the moral panic following the New Year's Eve events in Cologne in 2015/16 and in Chapter 5 regarding the "sad truth" of "rising" crimes committed by immigrants.

Political identities are usually understood in a structurally similar way to crises. It is not asked how they came into being and when it is, then only through objectively determinable, macro-structural processes; otherwise attitudes are set in stone. It is dangerous and simpleminded to claim that mainstream parties 'must not neglect the attitudes and expectations of the right-wing electorate' (Jaschke 2013, 35). I disagree

[36] One of the few exceptions and a breath of fresh air is Michal Krzyżanowski's (Krzyżanowski 2020; Krzyżanowski, Triandafyllidou, and Wodak 2018) work. He pays a lot of attention to the performance of crises and moral panics by the mainstream which, in his terminology, "normalises" racist discursive positions. There are many parallels to his analyses and mine, even down to the attention paid to newspaper covers which exemplify the femonationalism present in the mainstream debates on immigration, in his case in Poland (Krzyżanowski 2020, 521), which are virtually identical to the one's in Germany following the New Year's Eve in Cologne in 2015/16 (see Chapter 4.6.3).

with authors who consider right-wing extremist attitudes as pre-existing the efforts by the far-right to structure social reality or mainstreaming effects from established elites. I argue that we have to pay attention to the process on how right-wing attitudes come into being and not simply state: '[s]uccessful right-wing extremist parties must be capable of reacting to unsatisfied public concerns' (Backes 2018, 470). Mudde and Kaltwasser (2012, 209), paraphrasing Arditi (2005, 90–91), compared populism to a drunken guest at a dinner party, who 'does not respect the rules of public contestation, (…) spell[ing] out painful but real problems' and as 'an expression of the will of a neglected part of the population'. Instead, I want to provide an explanation on how the far-right managed to make problems appear as *real* in the first place, articulated a supposedly *neglected* constituency that did not exist before, whose *unsatisfied demands* must be taken seriously. Indeed, this could only happen due to a specific configuration of the "horizon" on which far-right demands are understood and struggle for meaning, which Chapters 4 and 5 will argue.

This is not to say that objective facts do not play a role in the formation of political identities, say a large number of refugees arriving in Germany. 'However, the way the issue enters public discourse is not an objective given, but is influenced by a variety of political and social actors, most notably political parties and the media (…) [who] largely, though not solely, decide how an issue is framed and thus to which attitudes and values an issue is related' (Mudde 2007, 300). I do not want to only pay lip service to the constructed nature of the social and then fall back on objective macro-structural and anomic processes. In the analysis, I make it the backbone of my research through the focus on discourse and discursive articulations.

Everything I have considered thus far boils down to this crucial argument, centred around a certain conception of identity and social change. In my mind,

research on the far-right in general, and on the German far-right specifically, would benefit from asking how these political actors manage to establish a “political identity” that is shared by their supporters. Political identities are influenced – and therefore changeable and not essential - by ‘*little systematised and continuously unarticulated conceptions over that which determines political decisions, who is profiting from them (…) and what the purpose of the polity is*’ (Scheuch and Klingemann 1967, 21). My understanding of political identities resembles what is expressed in psychology and media studies as “frames”. These are ‘*collective patterns of interpretation, where particular problem definitions, causal relations, claims, justifications and value-orientations are brought together in a more or less consistent combination to explain certain issues, formulate critique and legitimise demands*’ (Neidhardt and Rucht 1993, 308). Without an understanding of the conditions of possibility of how individuals take up a certain “political identity”, how far-right constructions can even begin to *make sense* and *feel real* for parts of the population, it is impossible to explain the puzzle of why the far-right in Germany has been successful at a few, quickly fading points, and why the AfD then managed to gather a stable base of supporters in no time. In the next chapter I flash out my understanding of political identities in more detail and, importantly, how we can analyse them.

3. Theory – Thinking About Identity

> When Lacoue-Labarthe asks, "Why, after all, should the problem of identification not be, in general, the essential problem of politics?", we could add that the problem of politics is not identification, but identification *and its failure* (Laclau and Zac 1994, 35, original emphasis and with a quote by Lacoue-Labarthe).

3.1 Introduction

The literature review established that current explanations of far-right support in Western Europe in general, and regarding Germany in particular, are unable to account for the sudden transformation of the political landscape. I argued that to understand why far-right parties are successful - at different times in different places - we have to understand how they are able to construct political identities in a way that makes their conception of the social order and its goals, its ills and dangers, resonate with large parts of the population. I will claim that this occurred due to mainstreaming processes where elite actors take over parts of far-right discourse and thereby close the gap between "respectable" political discourse and a "radical" one.

Therefore, I rejected mechanical, actor-less explanations, which considered macro-structural effects of globalisation or post-industrialisation as responsible for far-right support. I also argued against social-psychological accounts emphasising an "authoritarian pathology" as well as socio-political explanations championing rational positioning on the left/right dimension and structural-institutional factors. These explanations leave the puzzle unanswered: why – even though there was a distinct and sizeable far-right potential in Germany and an emerging far-right supply in the 1990s (the so-called 3rd wave,) – did this potential not materialise in widespread support, while in the 2010s it did for the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD). In other

words, why did far-right identity constructions fail in the past but were successful in recent times?

Importantly, my project is not merely a case study in the sense where one particular theory can explain a certain part of social reality better than other theories, such as the ones just discussed. Within the theories which I consider as most helpful for a satisfactory explanation, there are still certain tensions requiring our attention. Hence, this chapter does not indicate in a step-by-step guide the way theory informs my research; I don't want to use a blueprint and put it, figuratively speaking, on top of far-right support, but also discuss shortcomings in otherwise very useful theories. I also envision a back-and-forth between theory and research praxis. To understand the messy and complex phenomenon of far-right support we cannot fix our theoretical categories *a priori*, expecting them to account for the phenomenon fully. They can serve as guidelines but need to be open for contestation.

My argument in this chapter takes the following form. Althusserian interpellation theory shows nicely how identities get constituted and that ideology is primary for any act of identification. However, its focus on the "dominant ideology" in society as well as revolutionary change cannot account for the intricacies of far-right support in Germany. Constructivist theories of political representation overcome some of these deficits, especially how "representative claims" can be made from a variety of places in the social structure and not only by the dominant class. Yet, they can't explain why one contingent set of claims gets accepted by parts of the population, while other claims are not. Poststructuralist discourse theory (from now on "discourse theory") provides ways to do just that. But here questions remain how particular demands – the basic unit of analysis according to Laclau – emerge in the first place. Psychoanalytic concepts like fantasy and enjoyment shed further light on how individuals can identify

in the way they identify but face similar critiques on why some particular objects come about as threatening the impossible fullness of identity and not others. To account for this, insights from media theory are discussed as a further condition of possibility for how far-right claims and problem diagnoses can become acceptable for parts of the population.

I will situate myself within the theories to be discussed, sharpen their tools for my purposes, and address some blind spots within them. Methodologically speaking, my goal is to articulate various theoretical concepts in a concrete context to provide a critical explanation of a problematized phenomenon (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 180). I articulate the concepts under a discourse-theoretical framework, which involves a modification of the logics and concepts to be discussed for my particular research purpose (Howarth 2005, 322; 327). Even though all bodies of theories are distinct traditions in themselves, none of them go against the ontological assumptions of discourse theory and are not contradictory when compared to one another. All in all, they prepare the way for an analysis which does not aspire to settle the truth of far-right support once and for all but aims to provide a better explanation than its “rivals”. In short, ‘the main aim of discourse theory is not merely to provide novel descriptions or facts about specific objects of investigation, but to produce new *interpretations* either by rendering visible phenomena previously undetected by dominant theoretical approaches, or by problematizing existing accounts and articulating alternative interpretations’ (Howarth 2005, 320–21).

3.2 Althusserian Interpellation Theory

Given the shortcomings discerned in the literature review, it is important to turn to Louis Althusser's theory of interpellation as a baseline for our understanding of the formation of political identities. In what can be described as the Althusserian watershed, the French Marxist convincingly linked the formation of political identities with the operation of ideology by bringing Marxism and psychoanalysis together (Therborn 1980, 7). Writing at the beginning of the 1970s, his aim was to understand the process of the (re)production of the conditions of production in modern capitalist society. He asked one of the basic Marxist questions: why do the workers not rebel against their exploitation? But his answer will differ markedly from previous approaches.

To start, the reproduction of the capitalist system requires the reproduction of the means of production such as raw materials, machinery, storage facilities and so on, and, of course, the reproduction of the labour-form through the payment of wages. But, crucially, Althusser held that other sectors of society also contribute to the peaceful reproduction of labour-power, such as schools teaching the necessary skills and attitudes for production or the church which naturalises exploitative relations (Althusser 1994, 119). While in the classical Marxist topographical conception of the social world the relations of production make up the economic base, on top of which is a "relatively autonomous" superstructure consisting of the politico-legal system and the ideology of the day, Althusser saw the two levels as more closely intertwined (Felluga 2015, 144–45).

Althusser both follows Marxist theory and goes beyond it. He subscribes to the classic Marxist idea that the proletariat acquiesces to their domination by the bourgeoisie since '[t]he ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas,

i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force' (K. Marx and Engels 1998, 67). But this conception is unsatisfactory, because it conceives of ideology as 'a pure illusion, a pure dream, i.e. as nothingness. All reality is external to it' (Althusser 1994, 121). He then goes beyond Marx by claiming that ideology does not obscure reality, but rather institutes a "new reality" (Freeden 2003, 25). It follows, that any proclaimed position outside of ideology becomes impossible; there is no extra-ideological reality (Laclau 2014, 11–37).[37]

Althusser also suggests there is no single ideology, a further move beyond the original Marxist conception of ideology. Instead *ideologies* are dispersed throughout society (Freeden 2003, 25). Here, his differentiation between state apparatuses (SA) and ideological state apparatuses (ISA) is relevant. Going back to Lenin, Marxism had only distinguished in its theory of the state between state power and the state apparatus (Althusser 1994, 109). Althusser adds ISA to this conception, namely the schools, churches, trade unions, the family and cultural associations, among others. They exist side by side with the SA, which are the traditional institutions like the army, the courts, the police, etc. Yet a strict association of the SA with the public sphere and the ISA with the private sphere would be misleading. More accurately, the two are distinct because the SA function mainly through violence, while the ISA's function mainly through ideology (Althusser 1994, 111). While the SA might be able to violently quell a worker's strike, the ISA's can guarantee that the strike does not arise in the first

[37] This is the main difference to other Marxist approaches to ideology, such as György Lukács' (1974) "false consciousness" thesis. There, the workers do not recognise their complicity in their exploitation and once they "see the world as it really is" would overthrow Capitalism. Undoubtedly, for Althusser there is a distortion taking place, but one in representing 'the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence' (Althusser 1994, 123).

place by instilling in the worker the idea that his drudgery is necessary for the growth of the nation or that through hard work he can redeem his soul.[38]

But, arguably, Althusser's biggest contribution to the theory of ideology – paramount for my argument - lies in his claim that the function of ideology is to constitute individuals as subjects. Althusser calls this process "interpellation" (or hailing) (Althusser 1994, 131),[39] which is directly connect to the topic of the thesis. I have argued in the previous chapter that to understand the widespread recent support for the far-right in Germany - which emerged quickly in 2013 after multiple previous failed attempts - we need to understand how political identities need to be constructed so that far-right supporters *can* subscribe to radical viewpoints. This goes hand in hand with a certain conception of the social order, including goals that need to be achieved through appropriate solutions and dangers to be fended off. Althusser refers to this as the "elementary ideological effect" and connects it to the formation of subjectivity:

> the "obviousness" that you and I are subjects – and that does not cause any problems – is an ideological effect, the elementary ideological effect. It is indeed a peculiarity of ideology that it **imposes** (without appearing to do so, since these are "obviousnesses") **obviousnesses as obviousnesses**, which we cannot fail to recognize and before which we have the inevitable and natural reaction of crying out (aloud or in the "still, small voice of conscience"): "**That's obvious! That's right! That's true!**" (Althusser 1994, 129, emphasis added, emphasis omitted).

The Althusserian linguist Michel Pêcheux uses a slightly different vocabulary to describe the same process. What he calls "domains of thought" are those socio-historical forms of stabilisation, which through and by ideology 'produce the subject and simultaneously *along with him* what he is given to see, understand, fear, hope,

[38] In my research I won't pay particular attention to Ideological State Apparatuses because I am more interested in short term changes of what kind of knowledge counts as self-evident, as a genuine interpretation of "reality". I contend that an analysis of the role of ISA's is more appropriate to historical analysis, say of nationalism and its propagation through schools, the church, trade unions and so on.
[39] However, this does not occur on an innocent terrain. As we will see later, the workings of ideology take place on a horizon that makes some identifications either more or less likely.

etc. (Pêcheux 1982, 112–13, original emphasis). Judith Butler points out how ideology forms “conscience” and therefore places limits on what is speakable and representable (Butler 1997, 114). It is in these ways that we have to read the dominant far-right tropes, such as those concerning the supposed criminality of refugees or their threat to an assumed German identity that can only be overcome if they subscribe to a German leading culture (“*Leitkultur*”). However, ideology achieves this way of seeing the world and the obviousnesses contained in it quietly. An ideology is successful if it can conceal the ‘ideological character of ideology by ideology: ideology never says “I am ideological”’ (Althusser 1994, 131). Similarly, ‘you can see for yourself how things are’ and ‘[l]et the facts speak for themselves’ are the primordial ideological statements (Žižek 1994, 11). This is especially so if the “facts” are officially sanctioned police reports or crime statistics, the topic of Chapter 5.

There remain two points of criticism to be levelled at Althusser’s theory of interpellation. The first concerns his uninhibited subscription to the importance of class struggle even when he wants to move beyond orthodox Marxism. It is unfortunate that Althusser never manages to jump over the shadow of class essentialism. He strictly held on to the belief that any theory of ideology depends “in the last resort” on the mode of production in a given social formation and the class struggle taking place in said formation (Althusser 1994, 121). The same also holds true for his former student Michel Pêcheux (see Pêcheux 1982, 98).

The second critique moves in a similar direction, namely that interpellation theory can only explain the submission to the dominant ideology or a revolutionary replacement of the dominant ideology. This is clearly not the case with the far-right in Germany. I stated in the previous chapter that the turn to the far-right should not be interpreted as a complete reversal in political attitudes allegedly traceable to the

processes of globalisation and post-industrialisation. Instead, far-right viewpoints that became acceptable were already present to some degree in the public discourse. The question is why they but suddenly became more attractive than other interpretations of the social order. But such an explanation is beyond the Althusserian system, which can only explain the subject's continued submission to an all-dominating social system. If the possibility of change is discussed, this change has the character of wholesale revolutionary reversal of the previously existing system. Therborn, for example, contends that 'the only kind of mobilization with which we are directly concerned is large-scale, rapid ideological mobilization of significance in threatening or reorienting a regime' (Therborn 1980, 119).

Indeed, David Howarth criticises that within the Althusserian system there is no way of understanding the struggle of conflicting acts of interpellation and identification, each trying to institute their own version of obvious, taken-for-granted meaning. Howarth traces this shortcoming to the functionalist outlook of Althusser, where the explanatory focus lies on the elements which guarantee the reproduction of the entire social system (Howarth 2013, 126). Crucial for my research question – and pointing towards the need for further theories – is that Althusser is not interested in the 'formation of new and the changes of existing forms of human subjectivity' (Therborn 1980, 32).

To overcome these limitations, we will now turn to constructivist theories of political representation. Our goal is to drive home the point of how interpellatory acts can come from a variety of positions in the social order, not only the dominant ones, and solidify our understanding of political identities as constructed.

3.3 Constructivist Theories of Political Representation

The concept of representation has occupied political theorist since the dawn of modern democracy. At least going back to Jean-Jacques Rousseau,[40] representation was looked at with contempt. Those after him only accepted it as an inevitable evil; a consequence of human societies getting too large for the kind of public deliberation early theorists favoured. This inevitable evil was supposed to be domesticated by representatives transmitting the wishes of their constituents as faithfully as possible (Laclau 2005a, 158).

The latter thought underlies Hannah Pitkin's (1967) monumental account of the different ways representation has entered human activity. Pitkin's path-breaking observations on the different instances of representation have been discussed widely (see e.g., Lawless 2012); I only want to elaborate on one major shortcoming in her understanding of "substantive representation", which she considers the "royal road" to representation, the only kind of political representation properly understood.[41] It pertains to the status of the interest of the represented and will lead us to the constructivist critique.

Two quotes by Pitkin bring immediately the point of contention to the fore. For her, representation in the proper sense means 'making present again' (Pitkin 1967, 8).

[40] As he famously put it in his *Social Contract*: 'the moment a people allows itself to be represented, it is no longer free: it no longer exists' (Rousseau 1993, 268).

[41] The other three usages of the concept of representation which she detects in modern social theory are descriptive, symbolic and formal representation. For her, all of them fall short of representation in its proper, political sense in one way or another (Pitkin 1967, ch. 3-5). She calls *descriptive representation* those instances of something being "typical of" or "resembling" something, in the way that a particular painting represents a style of art or a representative sample is accounting for a larger corpus. During *symbolic representation* an animate or inanimate object is taken as standing for something else, such as an ambassador representing a country or a scale representing justice. Lastly, under *formal representation* she groups two conflicting stances, namely the way someone is authorised to act on behalf of another with binding consequences (hence gaining capabilities to act) and how one can be held accountable for representing others (hence having particular obligations).

Further, '[a]s the "re" in "representation" means to suggest (…) the represented must be somehow logically prior' (Pitkin 1967, 140). It follows, that Pitkin completely blackboxes the represented and with that the crucial question of how the interests (and fears, worries, demands, etc.) of a constituency emerge in the first place. She assumes that there are certain sets of interests present within a political community, which the representative has to read off and then act on in the political arena. While the ultimate telos here is a scenario where 'perfect representation should represent perfectly' (Derrida 1997, 297–98; see also Laclau 1996, 50), it is clear that this situation rarely exists. But for Pitkin, the major unresolved questions of political representation are then how local and national interests can be juggled, who is responsible to represent the interests of future generations, or what representatives ought to do when they know that the constituency would act in a certain way, but a different course of action actually serves their interests more.[42]

In short, for Pitkin certain sets of interests are taken for granted as existing within a constituency and the representative who most accurately mirrors these interests will either get elected or replaced when failing to do so. Following this line of thought, it would make perfect sense say that post-industrialisation and globalisation bring about a "silent counter-revolution" against the rise of liberal and multiculturalist values in the population. In that vein, the German far-right was simply the first to notice and represented those who developed xenophobic, ethno-nationalist, and social Chauvinist viewpoints.

However, constructivist theorists of political representation would challenge such a line of argument. According to them, political representation à la Pitkin is

[42] This idea should not be read in a Marxist way where the party knows better what is in the interests of the proletariat. Rather, for Pitkin such a situation occurs when there is an information imbalance and the representative has to guess how the constituency would act if given the same amount of information (Pitkin 1967, 209).

fundamentally misguided in one crucial way: they argue that representation takes place in a more creative, generative, and dynamic way (Disch 2015, 488–89). Here, 'the practice of representation is never simply about the "*re*-presentation" of something that is already there (…) but involves a complex relaying movement between leaders and constituencies in an effort to forge a representation that is never transparent or complete' (Howarth 2013, 202). It follows, we should envision political representation as a bidirectional process instead of a unidirectional process so that both the move from represented to representative and the other way round are considered as constitutive for each other's identity (Laclau 2005a, 158). This conception stands in stark contrast to Pitkin's, for whom attempts to create the represented would amount a fascist theory of representation (Zicman de Barros 2017, 4; Pitkin 1967, 107).

Two corollaries follow from this. First, any purported unity of interests is 'necessarily a *represented* unity' (Lindahl 2003, 448, original emphasis; see also Mouffe 2018, 56). This is the dynamic or aesthetic moment of political representation, where different interests, which share between them nothing besides the fact that they are currently not represented, are grouped together in an equalising move (Laclau 2005a). By definition, every act of representation tries to institute something that is not yet present.

Second, there is a prior, creative, act, where '[i]n both the practice of speaking for as well as speaking about others, I am engaging in the act of representing the other's needs, goals, situation, and in fact, *who they are*. I am representing them *as* such and such (…) I am participating in the construction of their subject-positions' (Alcoff 1991, 9, original emphasis). This does not have to take the form of a grand plan where political subjects are duped into believing something they did not believe in before. Instead, it follows logically that once an individual can't represent him/herself,

even only thinking about a group of people elevates some aspects of their identity and brushes away others, never mind claiming to represent “their interests” and “what they really care about”. The same thought underlies discourse theory, which I discuss next. Here as well, because there are a number of different ways to represent something are possible, this results in a hegemonic struggle between a plurality of possible decisions (Laclau 1996, 52). Therefore, both constructivist theories of political representation and discourse theory agree that ‘politico-hegemonic articulations retroactively create the interests they claim to represent’ (Laclau and Mouffe 2014, XII).

I argue that we need to complement constructivist theories of political representation with discourse theory because difficulties emerged when it came to applying ideas from constructivist theories in empirical research. This is crucial, as my puzzle questions why certain constructions of interests (as well as realities, problems, and worries) by the far-right in the 1990s were rejected by the population but accepted when raised by the AfD in the 2010s.

The most developed analyses of real-world acts of representation stem from Michael Saward’s representative claim framework (Saward 2006, 2010). Saward defines a representative claim as ‘a claim to represent or to know what represents the interests of someone or something’ (Saward 2010, 38). In political practice, a would-be representative struggles against other actors and attempts to convince an individual or community of their specific concerns and ability to rectify them. As we saw above, this process is constitutive of political identity: ‘Makers of representative claims suggest to the potential audience: (1) you are/are part of this audience, (2) you should accept this view, this construction – this representation – of yourself, and (3) you should accept me as speaking and acting for you’ (Saward 2006, 303).

In that way communities are created through linguistic differences. They can be variously depicted as ‘”hard-working”, “good honest folk”, “patriots” and “concerned” or “worried” or “angry”’ (Saward 2010, 51). The important part to realise is that an individual may not have seen him/herself as a “hard-working patriot” before such a claim has been made. Indeed, contra Pitkin, it is impossible for a group of people to have completely transparent, singular, and obvious interests, which a representative only has to read off (Saward 2006, 310).

Importantly, the act of claim-making of who counts as a “patriot” and the characteristics which make up a “patriot”, is not confined to a privileged actor within the political structure or even “Ideological State Apparatuses”. Of course, it may help greatly to have a platform as a member of parliament, to be a high-ranking party member with access to the media, or the leader of a well-known social movement. But, representative claims can also be made by non-institutional actors, such as NGOs, interests groups, or celebrities (Saward 2006, 306).[43]

A prototypical representative claim by the far-right could then look like the following: “immigrants undermine German culture and the government is silent about it”. Here, they articulate that (1) “immigrants” – a certain kind, that is – have a negative influence on an (2) pre-existing German “culture” and that (3) this should be rectified by the claim-maker. This fixes the properties of “immigrants” as a threat, “German culture” as something under attack, and the far-right as the only ones able to avert the damage. To accept this claim, one needs to subscribe to all three parts as a genuine interpretation of the way society *really is like*; one has to accept it as “obvious”. If one

[43] To exemplify this point, we need to look no further than the role played by the vegan cook-book author Attila Hildmann during protests against Coronavirus restrictions in Germany (dw 2020). Even though he never appeared as a political actor before, he successfully connected his large base of followers with far-right conspiracy theories.

were to dismiss one part of the claim – that there is no threat or that the government is already dealing with it - then the claim would be rejected.

But one crucial question remains. If we subscribe to such a view where different actors put forward competing claims on the interests, concerns, and fears of a community - and I think we should - why does one particular claim get accepted, while others get rejected? To put it bluntly, why should a constituency accept the claim that its unfavourable social and economic situation is caused by immigrants taking away jobs and welfare payments, while a competing one, say, claiming that the same situation is caused by wealthy corporations not paying enough taxes, is rejected? In other words, we need to understand how subjective representative claims manage to appear convincing (Duan 2019, 203).

Unfortunately, this question is not one of major concern to Saward.[44] For me, he is making the same mistake as the approach he criticises in that he only plays attention to the role of the representative and leaves the represented and their will-formation blackboxed. Yet, importantly, 'audiences are not just voiceless masses waiting to be interpellated into popular subjects, but practice agency in regards to choosing to accept, reject or modify claims made about them' (Moffitt 2016, 105).[45]

This issue is vital. For a satisfactory analysis of far-right support we need to understand why the representative claims made by the REPs about the supposed

[44] He is not avoiding the topic completely, but also not devoting to it as much attention as it deserves. He mentions how the institutional position of a claim-maker can either improve or decrease the chances of acceptance in terms of being "authorized" or not. Similarly, a claim has higher chances of acceptance if it is experienced as "authentic", in the sense of the claim-maker being able to show to legitimately care about the claim and not just jump on a band-wagon (Saward 2010, 103–9). Other clues are self-explanatory like people need to be aware that they are part of an invoked constituency to judge the legitimacy of the claim or that intended and actual constituency not always overlap (Saward 2010, ch. 6).

[45] See also Emmy Eklundh on the construction of collective identities by the *indignados* movement and PODEMOS in Spain: 'creating political subjects is not a one-way street, it does not function as a river flowing into the sea' (Eklundh 2019, 239). This is a core difference to the way demand-side explanations account for far-right support, as discussed in the literature review.

threat of immigrants to German culture or their “criminal nature” were not accepted by the population in the 1990s, while in the 2010s similar claims made by the AfD were. However, empirical applications of the representative claim framework have so far failed to shed light on the crucial question of why specific claims get accepted or rejected (see, e.g., de Wilde 2013; Kuyper 2016). In short, ‘[a]lthough a lot of research has applied some sort of representative claim analysis, it seems that no one has ever assessed representative claims from the citizens’ standpoint, e.g., with a focus on the reception by a claimed constituency’ (Joschko and Glaser 2019, 138).

Even if some authors have brought attention to the constructivist dynamic of claims making, they have not given full accounts of it. For example, Heinisch and Werner (2019) analyse which parts of the population the radical right parties of AfD and the FPÖ (in Austria) claim to represent and if these claims are successful. They turn to party manifestos, establish which social groups are mentioned in them, and then compare the electoral success within those groups. But they completely lose sight of the construction of identities, values, and interests in the praxis of political representation. For example, they look at how the far-right describes pensioners in manifestos and if this matched with the “real interests” of the pensioners; in other words, did they feel represented, measured by electoral support? But this completely ignores the crucial question of how their representative claims succeeded or failed to create the pensioner’s interests they then claimed to represent. I contend that so far no one has produced a straight-forward way to analyse the reception of representative claims.

In sum, like in the Althusserian theory of ideology, representative claims also try to mask their constructed and aesthetic character (Saward 2006, 314); they pretend to describe the world “just as it is”. But the representative claim framework helps us

understand the construction of political identities without the Marxist baggage of the Althusserians. The invoked constituency here can be anything and we are not dependent on an explanation where one class tries to advance its interests and dominate another class. Indeed, Saward pays increasing attention to the performative dimension in his most recent writings where a similar process to interpellation is at stake: '[t]he effects of performances of representative claims, in all their variety, can be profound – they change what people think is the case, what they perceive as fact and fiction, and as a consequence can drive individual and collective behaviour' (Saward 2017, 79). In other words, constituting obviousnesses as obviousnesses. Therefore, both interpellation and claims making point out that in these creative actions, political actors or the media create subjectivities and interests that did not exist previously. Moving beyond some limits of interpellation theory, constructivist theories of political representation convincingly argue that these claims can come from a variety of places in the social structure and not only from the dominating class or inducing revolutionary reversal. The question left unanswered concerns the acceptance of claims made. I contend that to focus on individual acts of acceptance and identity change, like constructivists do, is doomed to fail. Instead, we need to understand the conditions of possibility of identity change. Discourse theoretical insights will be most helpful in this regard.

3.4 Discourse Theory

I consider discourse theory as the best candidate to answer the puzzle of why the interpellations and representative claims made by the far-right in the 1990s were rejected, but later accepted in the 2010s. One central concern of discourse theory, as

evidenced first in the writings of Ernesto Laclau (Laclau 1990, 1996, 2005a; Laclau and Mouffe 2014) and later by the Essex School widely understood (Glynos and Howarth 2007; Marchart 2018; Zienkowski 2017), is to account for social change from a non-essentialist vantage point. Ernesto Laclau develops his theory against the background of other paradigms which tried to understand social and political processes but have reached a *cul de sac*. He directs the strongest critique against orthodox Marxism and its ideas of economic determinism, gradual development of history, and the constitution of interests based on the position in the relations of production (Laclau and Mouffe 2014). But he also does not spare phenomenology, analytical philosophy and structuralism, which for varying reasons could not go beyond their own assumptions (Howarth 2013).

Discourse theory differs from these approaches because it is based on an ontology of negativity (Coole 2000). The guiding ethos of discourse theoretical research is to not focus on what society is like, but what prevents it from being (Laclau 1990, 44). This radical idea follows from attempts to overcome certain flaws within structural linguistics. The father of modern linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure (1983), provided revolutionary insights on the process of meaning-making. He went against commonly held beliefs and argued convincingly that elements within a system of meaning gain their identify not due to essential and immutable characteristics, but solely out of difference from other elements. Previously, descriptivists had argued that a tree was called a tree due to its “tree-like” characteristics. But the Swiss linguist, who would not see the acceptance of his theory during his lifetime, showed that identity is always only relational and based on difference, not positive attributes. A “tree” is called a “tree” in the English language only because it is not a bush or a flower or a vine. Since we could put out an announcement in all English-speaking newspapers that from

tomorrow onwards all bushes shall be called trees and all trees bushes, this proves that there is no essential positivity surrounding the concept of the tree.

The post-structuralist intervention was necessary to satisfactorily account for processes of social change, the topic of interest in this thesis. If all elements within a system gain their identity only through their relations with other elements in the same system, how do we explain their change? How are migrants first seen as mainly an enrichment for society and nowadays considered by many a threat to society, when migrants lack essential traits? The answer will lie in partial attempts to fix meaning; to interrupt the flow of differences (Laclau and Mouffe 2014).

We need to start from a position that announces the openness of the social as the only constitutive ground possible. All there is are negative essences that each social order is trying to institute, but which nevertheless will always remain precarious, failed attempts that are constantly under threat of being subverted (Laclau and Mouffe 2014, 82). ‘Society, then is ultimately unrepresentable: any representation – and thus any space – is an attempt to constitute society, not to state what it is’ (Laclau 1990, 82). But this moment of negativity is not only present within society as a whole, but in every identity. While social agents will aim for the objectification of their identity, “to be what I really am”, trying to implement a final suture, they will always run up against a constitutive outside that denies the moment of suture (Staten 1984). This is the insight prompted by the failure of structuralism; identity is not only what it is not, but there is also always something that prevents it from being. Otherwise we could have a - ultimately impossible – situation where all identity would be synonymous with itself, which would mean the loss of all identity. Let me explain this paradoxical sounding thought.

Constructions of ethno-nationalist identities invoke a foreign other. This other must be expelled from the homeland to free it from unwanted elements of different cultures so that the patriots can live happily in peace. But in making such fantastical claims, ethno-nationalists depend on the foreign other to imagine their pure society – even though the other makes achieving a perfect society impossible. If they were – hypothetically – successful in creating their utopia, there would be nothing left to identify with. If the homeland were in actuality just that, a place of living for all deserving people without interference, it would cease to be a homeland and instead just *be*; a patriotic identity would lose all its meaning.

Laclau calls this impossible and yet necessary relationship for the upholding of identity an “antagonistic relationship” (Marchart 2018). The notion of antagonism expresses the limit of all objectivity (to which identity aspires); it is ‘that which prevents the constitution of identity itself’ (Laclau 1990, 17). To summarise, negativity stands both for the possibility and impossibility of meaning, identity, objectivity and, finally, society. ‘The absence of meaning enables the possibility of meaning at the same time as it is constitutively impossible’ (Eklundh 2019, 83).

A corollary of the notion of “antagonism” is the one of “contingency”. If every objectivity is always partially constituted and partially threatened, then the limits of that order are constantly negotiated. Antagonism prevents the resolution of conflicts in a way where all rational participants could agree; an aim which is at the forefront of much contemporary social theory (Rawls 1999; Habermas 1996). Discourse theorists reject this possibility for the reasons given above and instead point to the contingency of social relations, meaning that the struggle over limits is one of constitutive undecidability (Norval 2004). Here, any decision will be one taken at the disregard of

other, equally possible ones through an act of power and never follows automatically out of the make-up of a social structure or the position of individuals within it.

This idea underlies the claim I made multiple times above, that we cannot attribute identity change to an impersonal process such as globalisation or post-industrialisation. Instead, we have to pay attention to political actors who articulate immigrants as responsible for a lack of well-paid jobs and, therefore, shift the limits away from an explanation where tax-evading financial capitalists are not made responsible for the same “problem”.

The category of the subject is also touched by these ontological insights. As indicated above, the conception of the subject underlying this thesis is not the Cartesian subject, assumed to be a unified and coherent whole (Zienkowski 2017, 122), but a subject of lack. For discourse theorists, the subject moves from ‘the position of that which explains to the position of that which must be explained, from *explanans* to *explanandum*’ (Allen 2000, 120–21, original emphasis). Just as society as a whole, the subject is also radically unfixed and overdetermined, there is an excess of meaning overflowing both of them (Laclau and Mouffe 2014, 76; 97). The political act *par excellence* is to domesticate these excesses, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a centre. The contingency of social relations is responsible for there being no *a priori* way to assess how this struggle plays out.

We can bridge the gap from these general insights to analyses of real-world practices with reference to the notion of the “demand”. The groundwork laid here will then be used to analyse the emergence of demands around cultural homogeneity in the next chapter. For Ernesto Laclau, the minimal unit of any investigation into the construction of political identity is the demand, as opposed to groups with their supposedly clearly defined interests (Laclau 2005a, 73, 2005b, 35). Yet, the notion of

the demand remains underdeveloped in his writings, especially regarding their theoretical status and the process of their emergence (Zicman de Barros 2021, 1). This is somewhat surprising, given that Laclau's entire theoretical foundation depends on it (Ronderos 2021) and that without it we will fail to come up with a proper understanding of politics as a whole: '[t]he universe of politics (…) is a universe of articulated demands' (Marchart 2018, 117).

Nevertheless, Laclau's elevation of the demand as the most important object of research lets me draw multiple strings together and starts to provide an answer for my puzzle. Firstly, both for constructivist theorists of political representation and for discourse theorists, whenever 'democratic demands are formed and expressed', this 'claim-making [is] constitutive of the identities of the individuals and groups involved in them' (Howarth and Norval 2016, 311), so that interests cannot be considered pre-given and objective (Norval 2012, 815). Whenever a political actor claims something to be a problem requiring a solution, different elements, which stand in a non-necessary relation to each other, get tied together in a novel fashion. Discourse theory calls this process the act of "articulation" (Laclau and Mouffe 2014). In that way, far-right hegemonic projects try to 'invoke alternatives to the existing political order. In doing so, they seek to project and inscribe new and unheard-of ways of being and acting, beyond the currently acceptable political languages and norms of our times, onto the political agenda' (Norval 2012, 810).

This, secondly, occurs through acts of interpellation, where competing ideologies try to make their contingent way of experiencing social reality the correct one, with an unquestioned comprehension of what exists and is right, as well as an affective identification with an Other that guarantees the fullness of one's identity. It becomes obvious that such a comprehension of the most basic political processes

would benefit heavily from a developed notion of a “demand”, as the formulation and uptaking of demands is intimately tied to the way individuals experience the world.

Thirdly, speaking from a psychoanalytical position, Slavoj Žižek contends that ‘Discourse analysis is perhaps at its strongest in answering this precise question: when a racist Englishman says “There are too many Pakistanis on our streets!”, *how – from what place - does he “see” this* - that is, how is his symbolic space structured so that he can perceive the fact of a Pakistani strolling around a London street as a disturbing surplus?’ (Žižek 1994, 11, original emphasis). However, I argue that this question has, in fact, rarely been answered. The crucial point usually disregarded is from what point onwards does someone conceive of Pakistanis as “too many”? And once that realisation has been made, why does this experience become an important part of a political identity, where “something should really be done to reduce the number of Pakistanis on the streets”?

I agree with the importance of the task laid out by Howarth and Norval (2016, 310) that ‘[d]emocratic theory should provide an account of the processes involved in the movement of senses of wrong, from inchoate expression to fully articulated political demand’, but argue that so far this has not been done, neither theoretically, nor empirically. I will analyse this process empirically in the next chapter via the example of the emergence of demands around cultural homogeneity but turn to the theoretical shortcoming first. Here, we have to go back to the original formulations of Ernesto Laclau. To start, he points out how in the English language - as opposed to other languages – a demand can mean two different things. It can signify a “request” in a more considerate way, as in “can I have your attention?”. Yet, it can also be used in a stronger way to make a claim or to impose a request, as in “I demand your attention”

(Laclau 2005b, 35). This differentiation becomes clearer in an extensive quote, which also indicates my major point of critique:

> Think of a large mass of agrarian migrants who settle in the shantytowns. Problems of housing **arise**, and the group of people affected by them request some kind of solution from the local authorities. Here we have a demand which initially is perhaps only a request. If the demand is **satisfied**, that is the end of the matter; but if it is not, people can start to **perceive** that their neighbours have other, equally unsatisfied demands – problems with water, health, schooling and so on (Laclau 2005a, 73, emphasis added, original emphasis omitted).

However, my questions are: how do demands emerge in the first place? Why is it that people come together and voice their dissatisfaction with, for example, schooling? At one point, their dissatisfaction with schooling or health care did not meet the threshold of making up a request (or a demand). It might have been a nuisance, the object of chatter, and people complained about it in private. But the intensity was below the level where there is widespread agreement that “something must be done”. But at one point, people start to organise, meet with others, and “demand change”. When does a nuisance turn into a request turn into a demand? Relatedly, when can a demand be said to have been satisfied? Who decides when it is satisfied?

Of course, Laclau would agree that there is no objective way to determine when a social condition automatically provokes a request and then flips into a demand. As he puts it, demands do not have a “manifest destiny” (Laclau 2005a, 127). We can’t say that the workers will demand revolutionary change when the social structure will be increasingly simplified into two camps due to the logic of capitalist accumulation or that globalisation produces an identity crisis in middle-aged blue-collar workers that makes them susceptible to the far-right. Instead, when there is no necessary connection between a social situation and a set of demands arising, we need to ask the Žižekian question of when the point is reached where the presence of Muslim

immigrants results in the demand to protect the cultural integrity of Germany? When is a *halal* Schnitzel considered an attack on German culture?[46]

Discourse theory should provide the tools to answer these questions, however, they have remained in the background. Instead, very unlike the basic premises of discourse theory, Laclau writes that 'a *social need* adopts the form of a request' and once the request is rejected 'a situation of *social frustration will, no doubt, derive* from that decision' (Laclau 2005b, 36) so that 'some kind of solidarity *will arise* between them all' (Laclau 2005b, 37, all emphases mine).[47] But can we say *a priori*, independent of the content of a rejected request, that a feeling of frustration arises automatically, turning it into a demand, which enters into equivalential relations with other demands?

It would be a mistake to argue that the notion of the demand does not figure in the theoretical writings of discourse theorists, however, questions around their emergence abound. They ask important questions, such as how one particular demand stands-in for a whole set of demands vis-à-vis the power bloc (Szkudlarek 2011). For Slavoj Žižek, '[t]his is politics proper: the moment in which a particular demand is not simply part of the negotiation of interests but aims at something more, and starts to function as the metaphoric condensation of the global restructuring of the entire social space' (Žižek 2008b, 248). This is also a central concern for Laclau, who spends a lot of time describing the process of how a logic of difference prevails when

[46] In 2016, the Federal Minister for Food and Agriculture, Christian Schmitt (CSU), argued for the necessity of a law that would guarantee the availability of pork meat in German schools and cafeterias, at times when the consumption of pork was falling. This, he claimed, was needed for a properly balanced and nutritious diet and out of respect for cultural traditions, which should take precedence over the protection of the interests of minorities. For a snapshot of the debate, see (WELT 2016). In a very similar way, a discussion emerged in Denmark around the issue of *halal* chocolate. According to a newspaper poll, 87 percent of Danes replied that they would not buy *halal* chocolate (Yılmaz 2016, 10).

[47] The same shortcoming figures prominently in other Essex school writings. In a very Laclauian spirit, Oliver Marchart states: '[t]his experience of an absent fullness, an experience which emerges due to a gap that opens within the whole way of life of a dislocated social or cultural identity, *may produce a request*' (Marchart 2018, 116). Then 'a transformation has to take place of a *frustrated* pre-political request into a political demand', after which the demand links up with other ones against an 'outside instance which is considered to be responsible for the *shared feeling of frustration*' (Marchart 2018, 115 all emphases mine).

demands remain in their pure differentiality isolated from other demands or how they sacrifice some part of their differentiality to enter equivalential relations with other demands (Laclau 2005a, 125–28).

Another set of concerns relates to the responses of already articulated demands (Norval 2009) or how those, who are not properly represented have the possibility of gaining political voice (Norval 2012). The latter is most often theorised in a progressive way, for example, how those with little agency or speech in our political system, such as refugees or the LGBT+ community, can "write their name in the sky" (Rancière 1999, 25, with a quote by Ballanche) or what kind of political ethos is needed to make such developments more likely (Norval 2012, 811).

More psychoanalytically informed approaches also increasingly turn towards the notion of the demand in Laclau's theoretical enterprise. They very rightfully point out how every demand is inherently related with a desire for recognition; a desire to be desired by the other (Zicman de Barros 2021, 7). However, this is mainly an ontological argument and does not help in the question of why a particular (set of) demand(s) emerge as being in need for recognition. They manage to argue convincingly that the emergence of demands is strongly influenced by a prior desire for recognition (Ronderos 2021), but are unhelpful in answering the question why some particular demands emerge and others do not.

We are now in a position to pose the same question in more ontic terms and apply these ideas to the success of far-right political projects in Germany. As we saw in the historical overview, the demands voiced by the far-right in the 1990s were mostly ignored. The interpellation of subjects and the far-right's claims on "what really matters" were not taken up and did not resonate. The far-right failed to make their conception of what was wrong in society seem evident. But, undoubtedly, after 2013 they

succeeded in that task and the people “demanded” cultural homogeneity, a reduced influence of Islam within Germany, and a change in migration policy. The people took to the streets in large numbers to protest against “mainstream politicians”, who “did not represent them anymore” and the “lying press” (*Lügenpresse*), which silenced the voices of the “silent majority” (Geiges, Marg, and Walter 2015). But if we cannot account for the emergence of demands in an objective way based on definitive social processes and they also do not emerge out of nowhere and by chance, how are we able to analyse them? Why do some demands make their way into the focal point of a political identity, become “non-negotiable” and desire recognition?

Let’s step back a little and inquire more about the theoretical status of demands; especially the question of what can be linked up as a demand and which conditions make the emergence of novel demands more likely. Here three concepts come into play, which build on the ontological framework presented above. These are dislocation, sedimentation, and reactivation. I will consider them in turn.

The concept of dislocation provides one way to think productively about the negativity inherent in social relations, the possibility of change, and the emergence of novel demands. It points to a specific situation - whose analysis is foreclosed in more traditional approaches – where a rupture or crisis threatens the field of social objectivity (Stavrakakis 2000, 100); the moment of failure where the “normal order of things” is shaken to the ground (Stavrakakis 2000, 105–6). In the terms used above, during a dislocation previously instituted centres are seen as just that – a constructed centre and not an essential one. In these privileged moments, identifications are put into question and new ways to identify emerge.

For example, the reactor malfunction at the nuclear power plant in Fukushima completely changed Germany’s stance on nuclear energy from one day to the next

(Jahn and Korolczuk 2012). Previously, the political class agreed that atomic energy was a necessary evil, providing cheap energy with a low CO2 balance, and minimal security concerns. But, afterwards, the focus shifted to a form of energy production that is prone to massive failure, worrying concerns for future generations in terms of nuclear waste, and a barrier to progress in renewable energies. The way nuclear energy was thought about before was completely shaken to the ground.

The previous discussion was necessary to clear the theoretical playing field on top of which we can now place the two processes that are for major interests in this thesis, namely sedimentation and reactivation. Ernesto Laclau borrows these terms from a slightly different context from the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl and adapts them for political analysis. Husserl (1970) used the terms to underscore his effort in understanding the origins of our scientific truths and their moment of constitution. In his bid to challenge the received wisdom of divergent schools of thought such as positivism, nihilism, and existentialism, he problematized the essentialising “truths” underlying them (Howarth 2013, 44). Husserl called the process of the forgetting of origins “sedimentation” and the return to the constitutive aspects of meanings and practices “reactivation” (Laclau 1990, 34).

In terms of political analysis, any act of interpellation or claim-making occurs against the background of sedimented practices, even if they want to challenge them. Sedimentation refers to the common experience, where when ‘an act of institution has been successful, a “forgetting of the origins” tends to occur; the system of possible alternatives tends to vanish and the traces of the original contingency to fade’ (Laclau 1990, 34). But what is especially important for my analysis of far-right support in Germany is that reactivation, on the other hand, consist in those efforts which question

the contingent moment of foundation and point to the potential for different constructions (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 116).

It is important to note that Laclau did not understand reactivation as a literal return to the origins, where every struggle can again be renegotiated from scratch. Rather, he wants to point out that the previously unnoticeable contingency of the "objective" situation and its corollary "facts" and "truths" is revealed. Laclau calls those moments, in which the sedimented and objective character of social relations prevails "the social", while when previously established meanings are challenged and struggle with each other "the political". In everyday life, there is a constant process of what counts as social and as political (Laclau 1990, 35).

Regarding the identity constructions made by the far-right, we can say that during the 1990s claims surrounding the violence of refugees and negative effects for lower class Germans on housing, work, social benefits etc. could not get accepted because they ran up against a bulwark of other, sedimented, ways of seeing the social. Such were that immigrants enrich the cultural make-up of society and that their economic activity actually helps the welfare state. However, for reasons to be shown, the societal consensus of not voting for the far-right broke down 20 years later as well as the *cordon sanitaire* put up by media elites. Suddenly previously unacceptable claims could be taken up as *the way* to view society. One possibility to assess the success of a counter-discourse such as the one by the far-right is to pay attention to the way their claims are articulated by competing discourses (Zienkowski 2017, VI). My hunch is that established political actors in the 1990s did not take up elements of far-right discourse in their own programme, but that it got "mainstreamed" only in the 2010s, following the publication of the book "*Deutschland schafft sich ab*" by Thilo Sarrazin (2010) and the subsequent turns in the integration debate.

As should be clear by now, dislocatory moments figure as the main candidates for the reactivation of previously objectified identities and structures. In those moments, subjects are confronted with the contingency of social relations more directly than at other times and are faced with the realisation that their ideological fullness is merely ideological (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 110). This makes possible the rearticulation and reconstruction of political reality, out of which follows a novel constitution of political identities (Laclau 1990, 50).

Yet, as we said above, change does not automatically follow from a dislocatory moment. Regarding his research on the politics of airport expansion (Griggs and Howarth 2013), Howarth points out that '[i]n a situation *where identities are threatened* - for example, the building of a new runway – social actors may need to reconstruct and redefine their identities to deal with this new situation, and it is precisely in this context that new forms of political agency are likely to arise, as subjects construct and identify newly constructed and available discourses' (Howarth 2013, 252, my emphasis). As Howarth would no doubt agree, yet I want to particularly point out, the way identities are threatened is not given, but has to be constructed. To put it differently, not even dislocations are objectively given, but have to be constructed.

One particularly promising concept that I will rely on in the analysis is the concept of the "horizon". It is most helpful in answering the puzzle of why earlier interpellations by the far-right failed but the ones the AfD put forward in the 2010s succeeded. Laclau understand the horizon as 'not one among other objects but an absolute limit which structures a field of intelligibility and is thus the condition of possibility for the emergence of any object' (Laclau 1990, 64). I argue that the way demands can "grip" subjects; appear as "necessary" is strongly influenced by the horizon on which they are inscribed and negotiated.

As is the case with many Laclauian concepts, the horizon plays a role in representing the imaginary unity of society. That is why he ascribes to the horizon a mythical character, where in a “metaphorising” move some concrete content aspires to represent a fully achieved identity, something beyond its particularity, a promised land (Laclau 1990, 62–63). The horizon is that space of inscription upon which all multifarious demands are placed, interpreted, and understood. Hence, I argue that to understand the emergence (or not) of particular demands, we need to understand on what kind of horizon they interact with other possible demands. Because ‘[h]orizons make possible and limit what may appear as relevant subjects and objects of politics’ (Norval 2012, 810), I ascribe to them a privileged status which influences the intelligibility of requests, grievances, or demands, and hence, their emergence.

To give an example of a horizon: the role of the American army and America itself in international relations is heavily influenced through the “war on terror”. This horizon fixes the understanding of certain dangerous others that threaten American society, it legitimises military acts abroad that risks many civilian casualties, and introduces a certain kind of (drone-based) warfare as necessary. If the horizon was structured differently, discussions on the army budget, humanitarian concerns around modern warfare, or the role of the US in international relations would change in turn. Every particular aspect relating to the military-ethico complex has to be articulated on the horizon paved by the “war on terror”, otherwise its intelligibility is threatened. The architects of the “war on terror” present it as the only possible response in a hostile world via interpellations, but there is no guarantee that the horizon will not be replaced by a different one in the future.

This example brings our attention to an interesting point, relating to the interplay of dislocation and horizon. It seems that for Laclau, the horizon is somewhat primary

and moments of dislocation take place on the horizon. Regarding the moment of change, Laclau writes: ‘insofar as a mythical space begins to absorb less social demands, and an increasing number of dislocations that cannot be integrated into that representation coexist, the space is, so to speak, re-literalized; its power of metaphorization is reduced, and its dimension of horizon is thus lost’ (Laclau 1990, 65). Similarly, he says that horizons ‘are located beyond the precariousness and dislocations typical of the world of objects’ (Laclau 1990, 64). While I do not want to switch this understanding around, we can make two points: first, and as discussed above, it is still not clear how a horizon either “absorbs less social demands” or does so successfully. But putting that thought to the side, there are also complex questions emerging on how dislocation(s) change the horizon itself.

To return to our example above, the terror attack of 9/11 was a dislocatory moment *par excellence* (Nabers 2009) and it occurred on a fairly rigorous horizon – the important role the military plays for social cohesion in the US, the role of the US as the only superpower after the fall of the Soviet Union and its status as “world police”, its dependence on oil etc. – but it also inaugurated a definite change in the horizon.

But, crucially, we can pose the same question regarding the solution of a dislocation – which elements win out in the struggle for meaning to make sense of the event – also to the change in horizon. How does one particular horizon replace or change the make-up of the previous one? One fairly straightforward reply points to the availability of alternative projects. ‘To break out from the common way presupposes not only a sense of dislocation, of dispute and dissatisfaction, but also the *availability* of an alternative imaginary horizon, something transcending the here and now, disclosing at least the possibility of new worlds’ (Norval 2012, 821, original emphasis).

But if there are different horizons available, how does one particular one win out and embody the mythical fullness anew?

Laclau gives another possible answer in that sometimes it is enough to provide *any* alternative to a failing order. He provides the example of the rise of Nazi discourse in the 1920s, which did not automatically result out of a situation of economic crisis, but 'was the only one in the circumstances that addressed *the problems experienced by the middle classes* as a whole and offered a principle for their interpretation', because 'no other discourse presented itself as a real hegemonic alternative' (Laclau 1990, 66, my emphasis). But such a line of argumentation seems to go against the basic convictions of discourse theory and introduces again unwanted elements of determinism and disregard of constructivist insights into the analysis. Here the snake bites its own tail; was not the concept of the horizon introduced to make visible the way an economic crisis can be understood, who is suffering from that crisis, and how to solve the problem? Isn't it the case that political projects try to present themselves as the only "viable alternative" via interpellatory acts, diverting attention from their own, particular, ideological character? Laclau also emphasises that the "credibility" of a discourse influences its acceptance or rejection (Laclau 1990, 66), but doesn't credibility depend on the horizon in the first place?

With regards to empirical analyses of far-right support, Ferruh Yılmaz (2016) has provided a similar explanation that I have been hinting at. He shows brilliantly, how in Denmark the far-right has shifted the horizon upon which terms such as "Dane", "immigrant", or "Muslim" acquire their meaning. Whereas previously, foreign immigrants were considered Turks, Arabs, Pakistanis, North Africans and so on, hegemonic interventions in the 1980s by the far-right articulated them all as belonging to a foreign other; "Muslims" which were seemingly diametrically opposed to "Danes".

Similar to Germany, the dislocatory event enabling this reinscription were two newspaper adverts created by a conservative pastor and, hence, not a traditional political actor. The public debate around the adverts eventually changed the horizon in a way that made possible to consider elements previously thought distinct from culture - such as citizenship, the economy or security aspects - to be heavily intertwined with culture (Yılmaz 2016, 18). In Denmark, the far-right brought about a new collectivity, which was not empirically given, but articulated; a 'new historical bloc (…) anchored in the perception of common core values that brings [people] together. The new social horizon, structured by the new cultural antagonism, originates with the populist Far Right but has become the new common sense of the social order' (Yılmaz 2016, 187). Yılmaz introduces here two concepts going back to Antonio Gramsci, which also play a major role within discourse theory (Laclau and Mouffe 2014), namely, "common sense" and "historic bloc".

For Gramsci, 'even in the slightest manifestation of any intellectual activity whatever, in "language", there is contained a specific conception of the world' (Gramsci 1971, 323). Common sense underscores a shared conception of the world. While multiple worldviews exist, only a few of them manage to turn into common sense, reflecting 'the uncritical and largely unconscious way in which a person perceives the world' (Simon 1991, 64).

This relates not only to content but also the force with which individuals are attached to certain political projects and "conceptions of the world". Unfortunately, Gramsci was still thinking within the remnants of class essentialism. But his description concerning the force with which people identity via affective ties is crucial to explain far-right support. The affective dimension, which will be fleshed out more below, comes

to the fore when Gramsci describes this incredibly strong bond towards a political project that might lack “rational” or “positive” grounds. In Gramsci’s words:

> The most important element is undoubtedly one whose character is determined not by reason but by faith. But faith in whom, or in what? In particular in the social group to which he belongs, in so far as in a diffuse way it thinks as he does. The man of the people thinks that so many like-thinking people can’t be wrong, not so radically, as the man he is arguing against would like him to believe; he thinks that, while he himself, admittedly, is not able to uphold and develop his arguments as well as the opponent, in his group there is someone who could do this and could certainly argue better than the particular man he has against him (…) He has no concrete memory of the reasons and could not repeat them, but he knows that reasons exist, because he has heard them expounded, and was convinced by them. The fact of having once suddenly seen the light and been convinced is the permanent reason for his reasons persisting, even if the arguments in its favour cannot be readily produced (Gramsci 1971, 339).

Here we see again, that at least as important as believing in a particular content is to believe in *something*. What we need to understand is how the far-right manages to offer itself as an object of affective investment, so that reasons for their support might, in some cases, not be consciously reproduced but are *believed to be there*. We can also contrast this kind of inquiry with the socio-economic and socio-cultural explanations I criticised in the previous chapter, because they take certain identity changes for granted from which the far-right profits. Instead, it is necessary ‘to study concretely the formation of a collective historical movement, analysing it in all its molecular phases – a thing which is rarely done (…) Instead, currents of opinion are normally taken as already constituted around a group or dominant personality’ (Gramsci 1971, 194). In opposition to the approaches discussed in the literature review, this will be the process that I embark on from the next chapter onwards.

3.5 Psychoanalysis

We can benefit from psychoanalytical insights to analyse these affective investments that Gramsci was hinting at. Therefore, I now elucidate how psychoanalytical concepts like fantasy and enjoyment can help us to understand why individuals identify in the way they identify. This naturally speaks to my research question of why the far-right was at first disregarded and ignored but later taken seriously and supported. Psychoanalysis enquires about the role of affect and emotion in process of identification. Specifically, Lacanian psychoanalysis offers productive in-roads to political reality (Stavrakakis 1999) through its focus on the constitutive role affective libidinal bonds play for collective identities (Stavrakakis 2005, 71).

Nowadays, more and more scholars outside of psychoanalysis have started to incorporate the role of affects into explanations of social and political reality (Mouffe 2000; Eklundh 2019). However, this development has been gradual. The dominant academic position is that an investigation of emotions is redundant because the goal in political practice is to rid itself of overly emotional actions. Hence, no proper understanding is necessary. This goes hand in hand with the dominant conception of the subject I criticised above - the Cartesian, rational, self-conscious subject of analytical philosophy - where thinking and being overlap (Fink 1995, 36, 42–43). Instead, the psychoanalytical subject is one of lack and desire (more on that shortly). The last introductory point regarding the role of passions, is that not only are they disregarded in academia and condemned in journalistic commentaries, but, crucially, the far-right is making active use of passions in their identity constructions (Stavrakakis 2005, 80; Julius Schneider and Kleinberg 2020). This alone should warrant a closer inspection.

One core concern of all three theories discussed so far is that they all reject reality as being the "thing itself" or completely transparent. Instead, reality is based on meaning-making practices that are always destined to fail (Žižek 1994). Psychoanalysis provides us with a concept that aims to explain why that failure is rarely recognized. This is the *fantasy* with which social relations are dealt with. Unlike in everyday language, fantasy here does not refer to a flight or escape from reality, but rather the way in which the uncomfortable, solid-truths lacking reality is dealt with (Zienkowski 2017, 56–57). Fantasy protects us from the otherwise uncomfortable realisation that our taken for granted truths are just that and lack any solid ground. It is 'the appearance which fills the *void* in the midst of reality, that is, the appearance which conceals the fact that, beneath the phenomena, there is nothing to conceal' (Žižek 2008b, 235). Just as Althusser would have posited, fantasies do not merely structure our mental processes, but are also responsible for real-world, material actions. If successful – and it is most of the time – fantasy covers over the ineradicable lack of social relations, provides a certain harmony to the individual, and subjectivizes it to a certain practice or order (Howarth 2013, 247; Glynos and Howarth 2007).[48]

By introducing enjoyment, the somewhat awkward Anglicisation of the French *jouissance*, we can now draw multiple strings together and relate these thoughts to real-world social and political processes. Lacan, in his return to Freud, hones in on the sometimes intensely strong make up of our libidinal bonds (S. Freud 1922), up to the point where enjoyment becomes 'a satisfaction so excessive and charged that it becomes painful' (Stavrakakis 2005, 72). However, because we always have to desire *something*, and that desire can never be fulfilled, it follows that enjoyment is also never

[48] Here we can also draw similarities to the concept of dislocation introduced above, which we said enabled novel identifications. That is, when fantasies are not successful in structuring social and political reality, when they lose their "objective" character they aim to institute, a feeling of "loss of reality" ensues, which makes new identifications possible (Glynos 2001, 200).

far away. It stands in for the lost mother-child unity - which is idealised and never was complete in the first place - and aims to get back that excitement of pleasure which, nevertheless, can quickly turn into pain (Fink 1995, 60). Enjoyment is the coals in the fire of fantasy, warming most of the time but you can also burn yourself badly. '*Jouissance* is the enjoyment a subject experiences in sustaining his or her desire. And since sustaining desire ultimately involves sustaining desire as unsatisfied, this *jouissance* is often experienced as a suffering' (Glynos 2001, 201–2). Indeed, there is a difference between the obtained enjoyment as opposed to the anticipation of enjoyment to-come (Lacan 1998, 111). But if there is a certain expectation in the individual of what enjoyment can provide, coupled with its necessary character in grappling with reality through the fantasy-scenario, there must surely be social consequences of the process? It is here that we can make inroads to political analysis, through the "theft of enjoyment".

As mentioned, political projects thrive through exclusionary practices and construct identities by opposing themselves to something they are not. The same happens with regards to enjoyment. Here, they claim that the enjoyment which their supporters are lacking is stolen from them by an other (Žižek 1997, 32) and this is the only thing that stands between them and a harmonious society. Hence, the goal is to recapture the stolen enjoyment. Such an imaginary promise characterises political projects, social roles and even consumer choices (Glynos and Stavrakakis 2008, 261).

Often, this happens in contradictory ways. The German far-right may claim that immigrants are a burden on the social welfare system due to their laziness and that they steal good, well-paying jobs from Germans at the same time. If it were possible to limit access to social welfare systems or jobs for immigrants and get that blockage

out of the way, Germans would finally be able to regain their economic prosperity and enjoy their way of living.

It follows, that the specific content of the claims of political projects and their "truth" or "falsity" matter less than what is considered "typical' (Glynos 2001, 209). This insight will allow me to analyse the infamous publication by Thilo Sarrazin (2010), "Germany Abolishes Itself", in a new light. The discussions surrounding the book at the time focused heavily on "correcting" his claims, e.g., concerning the supposed intellectual inferiority of immigrants versus Germans. Indeed, an entire edited volume "fact-checked" Sarrazin (see Foroutan 2010). Independent of the truth or falsity of his claims, what is more important is that, for reasons to be investigated, the publication shifted the horizon on which the debate surrounding immigration, integration, and national identity took place. Once the "lazy, stupid, child-rearing (Muslim) immigrant" was pronounced as a "typical", dangerous other and entered public consciousness as a fantasy, future claims by the far-right found more of a hold on the social surface.[49]

One obvious difficulty with such an explanation is how to 'empirically track these embodied and "enjoying" aspects of subjectivity and identification (…) What counts as evidence for its presence, and how are these "presences" and effects explored in particular contexts' (Howarth 2013, 181)? While it is impossible to give an answer to that important question *a priori* without looking at the concrete material, two distinct features can help which are noticeable in the articulations of political projects in their attempts to master reality.

First, claims and interpellations relating to the utopia of a reconciled society – however that may look like, it depends from project to project - are belonging to the beatific side of fantasy. Second, the other(s) whose enjoyment stands between the

[49] My example follows the logic of a different one given by Žižek (2008b, 205), where the "black single mother" is taken as "typical" in social welfare discussions.

utopia and the current reality is referred to as the horrific dimension (Žižek 1998, 192). While the former promises a fullness-to-come, the latter warns of the impeding catastrophe that will come about if the rival forces prevail (Glynos and Howarth 2007, 147). These struggles are omnipresent in every society and can constantly be displaced. One way this plays out is indicated by the struggle about the "true" characteristics of immigrants. Are immigrants part of a utopian society rich with cultural diversity and an abundance of choices of cuisine, music, and art? Or is this diversity actually what stands in the way of a rich and fulfilling way of life, blocking the enjoyment of pork through introduction of *halal* food?[50]

However, there are a number of unanswered questions remaining before we can operationalise these insights. It is noteworthy, though not very surprising, that we face a similar difficulty like the one pointed out regarding discourse theory and the direction of change. Psychoanalysis, when directed onto the political plane, can help explain the force of change, but faces difficulties in terms of why one particular object is believed by many to have stolen our enjoyment and not another. The process is clear, but the content isn't. As opposed to some, who contend that it is one of the strengths of psychoanalytically inspired discourse analysis to explain the *why* of political action (Marchart 2018, 144–45), I claim that there still remain some enigmas left to solve.

Above, I gave the example that discourse theory is not well positioned to explain how the racist Englishman experiences a Pakistani walking by in the streets as a dangerous surplus of foreigners. I asked, at what point does this experience manifest, when is the tipping point reached where a subject experiences foreigners as "too many"? Of course, this is explained by the "theft of enjoyment", but when is it

[50] See footnote 46 above. Of course, this struggle is influenced by the make-up of the horizon upon which it plays out.

considered a theft? Žižek writes that ‘what “bothers” us in the “other” (Jew, Japanese, African, Turk …) is that he appears to enjoy a privileged relationship to the object [say, social welfare payments] – the other either possesses the object-treasure, having snatched it away from us (which is why we don’t have it), or he poses a threat to our possession of the object’ (Žižek 2008b, 240). The question that remains to be answered is: when does it start “bothering” us? The answer that I want to provide in this thesis draws on the claims-making activities of political actors broadly understood, which influence the horizon upon which different demands can either be inscripted and taken as a “proper” way of dealing with social reality or fail to emerge as “obvious” alternatives.

Žižek is acutely aware of this problematic, but only displaces it one level further without answering it. This becomes clear when he writes: ‘how does an empirical, positively given object become an object of desire: how does it begin to contain some X, some unknown quality, something which is “in it more than it” and makes it worthy of our desire?’ (Žižek 2008a, 133). It follows, we are still unaware why something, instead of something else, enters the fantasy-scene. Yet our focus on the process of the mainstreaming of far-right positions in elite and especially media discourse, discussed next, we can shed some light on this.

Understanding this process is also important from a position of critique when we want to overcome the ways individuals identify with fantasies provided by the far-right. In many parts of academia and journalistic commentaries it seems to suffice to show the “falsity” of the far-right fantasy. For example, if we make the population aware that immigrants are actually less dangerous than native Germans then far-right support would decline. However, we should not focus exclusively on the truth-value of far-right statements, but also aim to understand why the figure of the immigrant (among others)

is emotionally invested in and used to successfully cover over the ineradicable lack of social relations; why subjects choose to enjoy in that way and not another (Žižek 2008a, 49; Stavrakakis 2005, 89).

3.6 Media Theory

The last theoretical body of literature I want to discuss regards the role of the media, especially when it comes the world-making activities of print and broadcast media.[51] This relates to my puzzle in two ways: one, how we should understand the role of the media in constructing social reality in general, and two, more specifically, how media outlets have treated the far-right in Germany in the past and present. Insights discussed below are important to justify the attention I pay to media content in the next two chapters, especially via smaller vignette-style analyses, while in the Chapter 6 I turn in greater detail to one particular media genre, televised political talk shows. There, I continue the discussion started here with more specific points on televised media, media effects for talk show viewers, and media logics. But I consider the role of the media for the rise of the far-right in Germany so important that it warrants its own discussion here as well. I first develop my overall media-theoretical conception before I turn to the contextual discussion of the relation between the far-right and the media in Germany, underscored by a few brief examples.

[51] There are some important arguments to be made on how the German far-right uses social media to spread their viewpoints and how individuals gather in echo-chambers on social media, e.g., Facebook groups that are not officially party affiliated. This certainly forms another part of the conditions of possibility of far-right support. But for reasons of expertise and breadth, this thesis is unsuitable for such an endeavour. I will just use some examples of Tweets or Facebook posts in the next couple of chapters but won't do justice to the nexus of far-right support and social media. For some insights, see Arzheimer (2015) or Hillje (2017).

In continuity with my non-essentialised conception of political identities, my media-theoretical understanding is also based on constructivist insights. Indeed, reading discourse theory together with constructivist media theory is a well-established practice in the literature (Hall 1982; Carpentier and de Cleen 2007; Moffitt 2017). In that vein, just as no pre-discursive identities to be discovered exist - such as modernisation losers - no media message exists that merely reflects social reality. The production of media messages is foundational for social reality and imbued with processes of power; they are “signifying practices” (Hall 1982). It follows, the media does not merely report on events as they happen but instead ascribe significance to them, by choosing to focus on some aspects and neglecting others (Hall 1980). In the most apt formulation that expresses my stance the closest, ‘[m]edia representations gain influence because people’s social constructions of reality depend heavily on what they see, hear, and read rather than on what they experience directly’ (Bandura 2004, 78). Whereas I will discuss the important issue of media reception and media effects in more detail in Chapter 6, it suffices for now to state the consensus in media studies that, at the minimum, the media has an agenda-setting role. According to this consensus, those problems that receive the most prominent attention by the media in turn become the problems the public considers the nation’s most important ones (Iyengar and Kinder 2010, 16).

Importantly, the far-right also benefitted from changing media reporting due to commercial and competition pressures. To attract readership and increase advertising revenue, media outlets have increasingly turned towards a sensationalising black-and-white style of coverage, strongly resembling the kinds of explanations of- and easy fixes to complex problems that the far-right put forward (Golder 2016, 488, see also Mazzoleni, Stewart, and Horsfield 2003). Further, parties on the fringes of political

discourse can, with help of extensive media coverage, appear to have a stronger support base than they do in actuality. When funding is still low at the beginning of a challenger party's life-cycle it is difficult to spread their message to a large audience. More so than the party could achieve by itself, media coverage increases attention which in turn confers legitimacy (Ellinas 2010, 3; 7). This process has been wonderfully described by Jean-Marie Le Pen following his first invitation to a televised debate. His invitation was a calculated tactical move by the then-President Francois Mitterrand to split the conservative vote in 1984. Le Pen later reflected on the experience in the following words:

> Just like that, I became an acceptable politician. Just like that, I must have changed my "look", just as they are saying today. And yet, I had changed neither my look, nor my message, nor my language, nor my behaviour. What had changed was that a television network, Antenna 2, granted me an "Hour of Truth". Sixty minutes, after a battle that has been on for 28 years. An hour is nothing, but it was enough for me to get rid of the monstrous and carnival-like mask that all my opponents have generously applied to me (Le Pen qouted in Ellinas 2010, 33; see also Mondon and Winter 2020, 37).

I want to use the insight gained from this observation to introduce the role of the media for far-right support in Germany specifically. If it was the case that Jean-Marie Le Pen suddenly gained legitimacy in France due to one media appearance, we would expect media access to matter in Germany as well. Especially so given that in the latter country, due to its experience of fascism, far-right actors had an even tougher time in gaining societal legitimacy. Indeed, historically, the German media had quietly agreed not to give any exposure to the far-right at all, not even in a critical way (Art 2006). Interviews with decision makers of important media outlets show that this was a conscious choice. In the time when the AfD didn't exist yet, this *cordon sanitaire* was still strong. For example, '"[i]n *die Zeit* we don't give any publicity to extreme right views. This is our policy. Even bad publicity is good for them, and we are not willing to expend

any space to host the views of extreme right politicians. Our policy is to keep quiet"' (quoted in Ellinas 2010, 36). This state was also confirmed by far-right actors, such as a by a functionary of the DVU, which was active during the third wave of far-right support: '"How would they [the population] know we exist? They do not see us on TV; they do not read about us in the newspapers; they do not listen to us on the radio. They do not know us!"' (quoted in Ellinas 2010, 121). Therefore, it will be important to draw out how the media in these days covers the far-right and their wider agenda.

When it comes to the different styles of media coverage, much of the literature agrees that the black-and-white style of coverage by tabloid newspapers and their simple solutions for complex problems benefits the far-right. But the role of the "quality media"[52] is more subject to debate. Usually, it is assumed that if the quality media takes a critical stance concerning the far-right, then it acts as a bulwark to protect the large-scale "infection" of society (Art 2006, 8). The idea is that by pointing out the racist and dangerous character of far-right parties their ascent can be stopped, as long as the population knows what they "really are like" (Muis and Immerzeel 2017, 915). But evidence from Austria might show the opposite. During the election campaign of 1999, the FPÖ received a similar amount of coverage in a weekly quality-magazine as the centre-left and centre-right parties combined, even though the latter two had triple the electoral support (Ellinas 2010, 72). Notwithstanding the derogatory coverage, this heavily disproportional media attention resulted in an astonishing 27 percent of the vote for the FPÖ, a result that it before or after never again matched.

Hence, I want to further enquire into the curious role of quality media for far-right success. This interest also resembles closely the mainstreaming hypothesis

[52] In German, the term *Qualitätsmedien* refers to respected media outlets, print or audio-visual, which are often publicly or semi-publicly owned and are motivated by neutral, non-scandalous reporting. The closest term in English would be "quality press", which is unfortunately limited to newspapers.

developed in the introduction. While it would be elitist to say that tabloid media are not part of the mainstream, I consider the quality media as a better point of contact for answering our puzzle why a large number of people who had never supported a far-right party in their lives[53] were interpellated rapidly by far-right claims. Therefore, the media outlets I use in the next two chapters, especially for the coverage on the integration debate and on immigrant crime statistics, are the two most read daily broadsheets in Germany, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (SZ) and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ), the most read weekly newspaper, *die Zeit*,[54] and the most read weekly political magazine, *der Spiegel*.[55] The televised political talk shows I analyse in Chapter 6 are all aired on public television by the channels ARD and ZDF, which are the equivalent of BBC1 and BBC2. If it could be shown that the coverage of those outlets mentioned on the topics close to the agenda of the far-right is already sensationalising, polarising, and creating essentialised others, we can then infer that the same holds true for tabloids or local journalism, if not even stronger. This would provide ample support for the argument that far-rights viewpoints were mainstreamed in the centre of society when in the past the far-right was actively ignored by the media.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have developed the theoretical notions I utilize in the next chapters to analyse the impact of mainstreaming processes for far-right support. The following

[53] This is clearly an unproven assumption, but I consider it warranted given past election results of far-right parties.
[54] For the newspaper rankings, see https://meedia.de/2020/01/17/die-auflagen-bilanz-der-tages-und-wochenzeitungen-bild-und-welt-verlieren-erneut-mehr-als-10-die-zeit-legt-dank-massivem-digital-plus-zu/, accessed 26/09/2022.
[55] For the magazine ranking, see https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/466154/umfrage/reichweite-der-nachrichtenmagazine-in-deutschland/, accessed 26/09/2022.

chapter analyses the emergence of new demands around cultural homogeneity via the national debate on immigration. I argue that two dislocations were especially crucial in changing the horizon upon which the far-right claims are decoded and understood. Chapter 5 takes interpellations made by elite actors and the media regarding immigrant crime as responsible for making far-right claims seem legitimate that were previously seen as outrageous and delusional. This helped the far-right in making their trope of the criminal immigrant who is stealing the enjoyment of Germans (their safety) acceptable. In the last chapter, I turn to televised political talk show debates and how this particular media genre has aided the far-right in sedimenting their problem diagnoses through questionable framing strategies by the producers.

To conclude, I hope that it has become clear after the literature review and theory chapter, that instead of 'conceiving of ideas as shifting slowly and gradually, [as] the result of large-scale social processes such as modernization, democratization, or generational change' we should focus on 'those moments when ideas change rapidly and dramatically. Instead of viewing ideas as preconceived entities waiting for some powerful carrier to make them salient, [we need to understand] how ideas are created and changed through political debates' (Art 2006, 3). This process will occupy the remainder of the thesis.

4. The German Debate on Integration – Mainstreaming via "Leitkultur"

4.1 Introduction

In the following, I analyse how particular demands around cultural homogeneity and a need to be protected from a dangerous, foreign other are constructed, emerge, and finally taken up in the population. I do this by tracing the developments and taken-for-granted meanings in the German "integration debate",[56] which functions as one major part of the horizon on which the far-right inscribes its demands. I argue that a change in the horizon, especially through discussion around the in early 2000 emerging concept of *Leitkultur* ("leading culture"), was largely responsible for the widespread take-up of far-right demands that previously were seen as extreme and outrageous. Table 4.1 below shows a summary of the main developments in the debate, which I discuss in the chapter in detail.

The explanations provided in this chapter should not be seen as *the reason* why the far-right emerged as an electorally powerful actor in the political scene in Germany but rather as one piece of the puzzle that works in conjunction with the following two analytical chapters – one on the construction of immigrant crime as a social problem and one on the types of framings prominent in televised political talk shows. Yet the integration debate has been crucial for far-right success in Germany. Indeed, in 2012, in his article on the (surprising) lack of a long-term successful far-right party, Frank Decker (2012, 24) contends that the '*failed politicisation of the topic [of integration]*

[56] Other terms for this debate are the somewhat awkwardly translated "Is Germany a country of immigration" and "Does Islam belong to (or have a place in) Germany" debates.

should be the main reason why bigger opportunities for potential rightwing-populist newcomers via the immigration issue did not develop'. Yet, unbeknownst to Decker, I will argue that in 2012 the massive politicisation and emotionalisation of the topic of integration was indeed underway – at least in retrospect. This is what this chapter will account for.

Table 4.1 Overview of the integration debate in Germany

	Integration	*Sub-phase*	*Leitkultur*	*Period*
First Phase	Guest workers intended as guests; communities kept separate to facilitate return of guests; integration stays at level of the "element"		Not present	1961-1973
Second Phase	Myth of return crumbles and co-existence of different cultures has to be organised; integration becomes a "moment" of discourse and is conceived as a two-way street, with duties and gains for both sides		Not present	1973-2000
Third Phase	Integration increasingly understood as a one-way effort to assimilate by the integrating element; interpellative efforts to view integration as a problem; *Leitkultur* as a way to overcome it		Present	2000-2017
		3.1	CDU politician Merz demands that immigrants assimilate to a particular German *Leitkultur*, immediate critique from all quarters including his own party	2000
		3.2	Dislocation I: SPD party member Sarrazin publishes bestselling-book on "un-integratable" immigrants threatening German achievements, Sarrazin brave enough to speak "the truth"; *Leitkultur* now considered less radical, already present in the basic law	2010
		3.3	Dislocation II: Moral Panic around New Year's Eve in Cologne; supposed incommensurability between cultures make a *Leitkultur* necessary; extreme Othering and essentialising homogenisation of groups by quality media and established politicians	2016

4.2 The First Phase of the Integration Debate – Slow Beginnings

The integration debate generally deals with the difficult question of how to organise the peaceful co-existence of Germans and foreigners. The latter migrated into the country especially during the German post-war Economic Miracle that followed the rough years of rebuilding a destroyed country. From the end of the 1950s, the economic productive potential exceeds the limits of the national workforce and so called “guest worker agreements” are made with different countries. First with European ones like Italy, Greece, or Romania, and in 1961 also with Turkey (Chin 2007). Over the years the cooperation with Turkey would grow ever larger and nowadays the signifier “guest worker” almost always invokes images of Turkish guest workers. While in 1967 there were only 130.000 Turkish guest workers in Germany, the number rose to over 600.000 in 1973, which then made the Turkish the largest nationality among all guest workers (Herbert 2001, 224).

Once the programme took up speed, important questions arose around the need to organise the social relations of different peoples living side-by-side. At first, the conception of a “guest” was understood literally, with work permits limited to two years, after which new guest workers would take the place of the previous ones. Indeed, it was the implicit goal by policy makers at the time to keep Germans and foreigners separate; to uphold the foreigners’ cultural identity and thereby increase their likelihood to return to their place of origin once their work period ended (Ohlert 2015, 155; 159). This is further shown by a complete lack of continuing the education of the workers, as school and university certificates were not recognised and the two

year limit disincentivised the need to learn the German language (Ewing 2008, 18–19).[57]

Therefore, while the notion of integration is not entirely absent from the debate, it is not yet articulated as a moment of discourse and stays on the level of the element. The Essex School understands an "element" as a signifier that still needs to be articulated with other concepts to acquire meaning, its status is floating and still up in the air (Laclau and Mouffe 2014, 91). Hence, instead of a fully fleshed out concept of integration, the concrete political debates revolve around "foreigner politics" (*Ausländerpolitik*), which mainly deals with questions around pathways to citizenship, voting rights, and family re-unification. Hence, the need to organise the co-existence of different cultures was mostly understood in a legalistic way, without undertones regarding the compatibility (or not) of those cultures. However, the two-year limit was contrary to the interest of the industries employing the workers, as they always had to train new ones. Due to their lobbying efforts the limited work permit was scrapped and it increasingly dawned upon policy makers that the "guests" were there to stay long-term (Ewing 2008, 15). Therefore, the concept of integration now moves on to become a "moment" of discourse where it acquires new meaning by entering differential relations (Laclau and Mouffe 2014, 91) and integration becomes a term that *can be* debated, e.g., as something positive or negative.

[57] It is ironic that the far-right today - on the back of the discussions following the publication of "Germany Abolishes Itself", more on that below - laments the supposed existence of „parallel societies" and a disregard for education in immigrant families.

4.3 The Second Phase of the Integration Debate – Myth of Return Crumbles

The second phase of the integration debate is connected to this “myth of return” slowly crumbling and the recognition to devise policies contrary to the previous ones of trying to keep the different communities separate. More practical concepts were needed to understand and organise that new reality, especially when more and more guest workers brought their families into the country and decidedly build their lives in Germany (Herbert 2001, 232). While there has never been a fully fleshed out and embraced concept of multiculturalism at work in Germany (see Ohlert 2015), this period is shaped by a vaguely multiculturalist understanding of integration that works as a two-way street. In that understanding, there are both requirements but also gains to be had for, importantly, *both* the host-society and foreigners. As opposed to the third phase, here the onus to integrate is not solely placed on the foreigner who has to assimilate into a normatively desirable dominant culture, but also the host society can learn and gain from foreign cultures; has a duty to be open to- and facilitate integration.

In other words, multiculturalism was considered at most normatively desirable, as mainly voiced by the political left, or at least accepted as a part of social reality that is not going away and had to be productively dealt with, as conservatives acknowledged. In that vein, the long-time conservative chancellor Helmut Kohl (CDU) posited integration as a necessary goal. For him, integration did not mean the loss of one’s own identity, but the peaceful side-by-side living between Germans and foreigners (Ohlert 2015, 174). Nevertheless, the beginning of the 1980s also marks the origin of the notorious debate around the question of whether “Germany is a country of immigration” - which since then hasn’t disappeared. Here we find the emergence of a discourse, introduced by the CDU, that for the first time probes if there is a limit

regarding the number of foreigners that Germany can accommodate without endangering a German national identity (Ohlert 2015, 163).

We can summarise the first two phases by saying that at the beginning of the guest worker programme there was a purposeful separation of different cultures and integration – if at all – viewed through a legalistic lens. In the second phase integration is then seen as unavoidable but there sprawl up opinions on hypothetical limits to it (Ohlert 2015, 175). The third phase, however, will assert essential cultural differences which makes integration "as not losing one's identity" as a whole impossible due to cultural incompatibilities by demanding of foreigners to shed the undesired elements of their culture and embrace a German one. The interesting part for the discourse analyst is the following paradox. Namely, the difficulty to fill the signifier of German culture and identity with positive meaning, while there is also an increasingly affective attachment to the importance of upholding German values at the same time. While politicians and the media point their finger at an increasingly necessary *Leitkultur*, it gets increasingly difficult to describe what that would actually entail.

4.4 The Third Phase of the Integration Debate – Enter *Leitkultur*

In 1998, 16 years of uninterrupted government under the CDU with chancellor Kohl comes to an end and a novel coalition of Social Democrats (SPD) and Greens emerges. The government introduces a new immigration law which makes pathways to citizenship and the naturalisation of foreigners easier, for example through the controversial "double passport" (Jens Schneider 2001, 352). Additionally, citizenship is no longer only dependent on the nationality of the parents but is also given to children born in Germany. This occurred against the fading backdrop of previously unseen

numbers of asylum applications at the beginning of the 1990s following the upheavals in Yugoslavia and the Balkan Wars. Shocking acts of violence by neo-fascists against refugees seemingly forced the hand of the conservative government in limiting the access to asylum in 1993, even though the then-oppositional SPD also agreed to the constitutional changes (Krell, Nicklas, and Ostermann 1996).

Within this climate the third and final turn in the German integration debate started to take shape. This is not to say that the debate changed on a dime, but rather its essential characteristics, such as the understanding of what it means to be German and who has to do the integrating work, changed slowly. I contend that a large part of the discursive work occurred through the emergence of and meanings transported by the concept of *Leitkultur*.

In a newspaper interview (die Welt 2000) on October 10th, 2000 and a couple of days later in a parliamentary debate, the CDU-politician Friedrich Merz[58] demanded for the first time from immigrants an active avowal of a German *Leitkultur*. This was needed, according to him, because integration supposedly can only work when there is a shared value system between the host society and the integrating element. However, Merz claimed that the existence of parallel societies[59] where Germans are the minority in some neighbourhoods or the different attitudes towards women by

[58] Since 31 January 2022 Friedrich Merz is the new head of the party after many leadership troubles since Angela Merkel announced her withdrawal from politics.

[59] The mainstream emergence of the concept of "parallel societies" is of interest and offers comparative analyses between different countries. In Germany, the term and its subsequent very negative meaning of a state to be avoided, goes back to the sociologist Wilhelm Heitmeyer (see 1998). In the UK, following the race riots in the North of England in 2001, a report was commissioned to assess the situation of different races living side-by-side under the framework of "community cohesion". The report, published in 2006 under the lead of Ted Cantle and therefore known as the "Cantle Report" (Cantle et al. 2006, see also Cantle 2008) also begins to warn about the grave dangers if "parallel lives", as they called it, were to continue. Around the same time, the head of the Commission for Racial Equality, Trevor Phillips, similarly critiqued the "failures" of multiculturalism, which according to him was the root cause of "parallel lives". He also stood up for the need of core British values, starkly resembling calls for *Leitkultur*. The parallels to debates raging back then in Germany are astonishing, where the concept of "parallel societies" was voted into second place by an expert panel in 2004 of novel words that are nevertheless destined to stay in the vocabulary. I thank David Howarth for pointing me towards the Cantle Report and Trevor Phillips.

immigrants stand in the way of integration – and that the *Leitkultur* would be a solution to that. In a nutshell, the *Leitkultur* debate is about a novel understanding of the never ending question of what constitutes the immutable part of a society and the foundation of its communality (Rohgalf 2016, 277).

Merz himself did not coin the term *Leitkultur* but borrowed it from the German political scientist Bassam Tibi. Tibi, however, used the term in an entirely different context and in an entirely different way. Two years prior, he called for a secular consensus on universal values, which he diagnosed as missing in European multicultural societies (Tibi 1998). A distinctly *European Leitkultur* was, when adopted by individuals, supposed to champion pluralism and tolerance as a way to overcome particularistic and nationalistic values, *not re-inforce them*. However, it was used by Merz and those who followed him exactly in this way. The Merz'ian distinctly *German Leitkultur* was definitely intended to work as a culturally homogenising force, arguing for a clear hierarchy between essential kernels of different cultures. Tibi has since then described the *Leitkultur* debate in Germany and the reconfiguration of his term as '*neurotic'*, '*polarising'* and '*quarrelsome'* (Tibi 2017, N.pag.).[60]

At the beginning, *Leitkultur* was frowned upon. After his impactful interjection into the integration debate, Merz was heavily criticised from all quarters immediately, including from his own party (Pautz 2005, 45). The social-democratic then-Chancellor Schröder warned that the usage of such terms indicated a '*march to the right*', while the Liberals discerned a claim to superiority by one culture over another, and the speaker of the Greens on juridico-political issues, Volker Beck, called it a '*firework of racism*' (Ohlert 2015, 3). Indeed, even from within his own party Merz received backlash, as long-time party secretary Heiner Geißler opined that a distinct *Leitkultur*

[60] In this thesis, whenever a quote is written entirely in italics, this indicates a translation from German to English by myself. If I want to highlight a part of a quote, this will be done in bold to avoid confusion.

could ‘serve as a justification for every skinhead, if somebody does not fit into his notion of Germany and he thinks he can beat him up for no reason’ (Manz 2004, 493).

Even though the term *Leitkultur* was not used by the Nazis themselves, it nevertheless invokes connotations of the superiority of one culture over another and it is easily imaginable that the Nazis could have used a concept like it. A leading culture is not far off from a leading race. Previously, a positively connotated, strong avowal of essential German traits could not be uttered in public discourse after World War II (Art 2006; Ewing 2008, 211). Language like this, therefore, fits directly into the mould of the far-right, which argues for leaving the Holocaust behind – supposedly a “bird’s turd” in German history[61] – and to finally focus on the positive history and aspects of Germanness (AfD 2017c, 47–48).

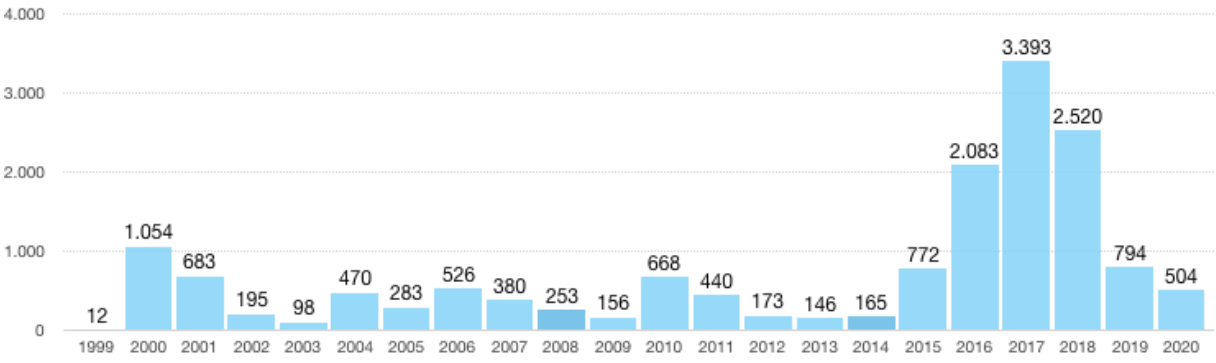
This explains the immediate reactions of rejection of the concept by almost all parties. However, as we will see in a moment, with time the total opposition to *Leitkultur* disappeared. While parties to the left of the CDU never embraced it unquestioned, they will later agree that there is something like a *Leitkultur*, only the content of it is up for dispute. Merz’ contribution, while not being very impactful from the beginning in terms of changing the integration debate, nevertheless

> opened up a thick layer of connotations and associations which included anything from constitutional allegiance to demands for “order” and “cleanliness”. This left a space for all kinds of images and stereotypes to flourish and was a deliberate strategy to kick off a debate that political opponents felt compelled to join in (Pautz 2005, 45).

[61] At a conference of the youth organisation of the AfD in June 2018, co-chairman Alexander Gauland said in a speech that ‘Hitler and the Nazis are just bird shit in more than 1.000 years of successful German history’ (dw 2018). Sentiments like this, even if in less extreme terms, have been present in the *Leitkultur* debate from the beginning. In the fall of 2000, the editor-in-chief of the interior politics section of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* lamented that following the student uprisings of 1968, one cannot talk positively about German virtues anymore, that the leftist media continues to unfairly remind the population over and over of Germanys guilty past (Manz 2004, 489), and that one should not shy away from a positive *Leitkultur* (Häusler 2002, 77).

To better trace the next developments within the *Leitkultur* debate I conducted a brief analysis of media representations in newspapers. They provide a solid ground to gauge those privileged moments, in which debates spike and we can expect new meanings and connotations of the signifier *Leitkultur* to emerge. I referred to a newspaper database search on "LexisNexis" for articles that contain the word *Leitkultur*, from 1999 till 2020. Reproduced in Figure 4.1, we can clearly see that before the intervention by Merz there was virtually no mention of the term in German newspapers. After 2000, the debate slowly ebbs away but gets reinvigorated especially in the years 2010 and 2016/17.

Figure 4.1 Newspaper articles with the word *Leitkultur* in them, 1999-2020



Taking this, as well as the existing literature into account, I discern two crucial moments that changed the content, meanings, and values attached to *Leitkultur*. These function as dislocations as defined above, namely privileged moments of discourse, in which previously taken-for-granted meanings are challenged and new identities taken up. Since the early 2000s, the meaning of *Leitkultur* got emptied out increasingly of positive contents whereas the need for *Leitkultur* was posited by an increasing number of political actors. I argue that this resulted in an integration discourse where there were no more problems *within* the integration process – whether on the side of the host-culture or the foreign culture – but integration *itself* was framed as *the problem*. It

supposedly could only be overcome if foreigners shed the unintegratable part of their own culture and assimilate to the German *Leitkultur*.

While previously integration was mainly debated through a lens of rights and laws, with the beginning of calls for a *Leitkultur* emerges a culturalistic discourse (Manz 2004; Ohlert 2015).[62] What I offer as a novel contribution is, based on the theoretical discussions above, how the dislocations changed the horizon upon which the far-right then later formulated its own demands. This change is largely responsible for how their demands were not seen as outrageous anymore but instead as genuine solutions to "real" problems, something that no far-right party managed to accomplish in Germany before. In short, elite actors were already "talking with" the far-right even before the latter actually emerged and therefore mainstreamed its message when it was yet unspoken.[63]

4.5 Dislocation I: The Sarrazin Debate

The first major shift within the German integration discourse following the introduction of the concept of *Leitkultur* in 2000 occurred after the publication of- and ensuing discussions around one of the best-selling non-fiction titles in German post-war history, "Germany Abolishes Itself" (*Deutschland schafft sich ab*) by Thilo Sarrazin in 2010. In total, the book remained number one for 21 weeks in the *Spiegel* magazine's non-fiction bestseller ranking - the most important one in Germany - and sold at least 1.5

[62] For a very similar turn in another European country, Denmark, where the far-right was dormant for a long time and then burst onto the scene, see Yilmaz (2016). Also there "innocent" publications sparked a debate that changed the fortunes of the far-right, namely two newspaper ads commissioned by the conservative pastor Søren Krarup.

[63] Katy Brown (2022) has introduced the distinction between "talking about" the far-right, e.g., as journalists, other politicians or the media do, and "talking with" the far-right, as in taking over their vocabulary and frames.

million copies. The first print-run even sold out before its official release date and after one week the fourth edition was in print (Handelsblatt 2012).

In the book, Sarrazin – a Social Democrat with governing experience and back-then member of the Board of the Federal Bank – challenges common-sense assumptions regarding immigration, properties of migrants, and the role of Islam in Germany.[64] Even though his book is full of crude theories, its success can in part be explained with his standing as a public intellectual who is not stigmatised from the outset as forwarding a far-right political agenda (Friedrich 2011, 17). Indeed, in the weeks preceding its official release different media outlets like *BILD* and *Spiegel* pre-printed parts of the book, which gave his writings a certain standing and legitimacy.

It is important to state that Sarrazin did not provide an analysis of integration and *Leitkultur* specifically but rather the conversations he sparked changed the horizon on which the integration debate took place, fixing certain images of Germans and foreign others. Therefore, I am less interested in a characterisation of Sarrazin's theses themselves but rather how his writings are negotiated, what parts are highlighted, and what is left in the background. In other words, I am more interested in the effects of the debate than just a description of its different phases.

Nevertheless, a short overview of the book's content is in order. Sarrazin depicts a bleak future for Germany, with '*threats and decaying processes*' lurking in the '*inner realm of society*' (Sarrazin 2010, 7). While Germany has for a long time made very good use of its productive and human labour capacities, it now enters a period of decline. This is because intelligence is hereditary to an extent of around 50 to 80 percent and unfortunately the more able Germans produce less offspring than the less able immigrants (Sarrazin 2010, 91). However, Sarrazin not only makes a biological

[64] For a summary of the book and the beginning of the debate around it in the English language see der Spiegel (der Spiegel 2010b).

argument, but also a culturalistic one. There, he produces strong, essential dichotomies, where ‘Muslims are characterized as religious, traditional, antidemocratic, patriarchal, inefficient, and intolerant, while Germans come off as secular, modern, democratic, productive, and tolerant’ (Meng 2015, 109). He couples his claims of the displacement of the Germans due to the higher reproductive rates of Muslim immigrants and their lesser intelligence in a very Enoch Powell-esque way. He approves of Powell as having been right in his grim prognoses – such as that in some parts of the UK white citizens would be in the minority in the not so distant future (Sarrazin 2010, 263). All in all, he presented himself via interpellations as a saviour who truthfully talked about the problems that the society currently faces but which the politicians chose to ignore.

Sarrazin was not a stranger to public controversy. In 2009, he gave an interview about the past, present, and future of Berlin – the city in which he worked as finance minister – in a fringe magazine called *Lettre International*. The interview is fairly innocent for the most part, but Sarrazin still introduces his favourite topics: the inheritance of intelligence, demographic trends, and integration rejecting Arabs and Turks. For example, he claimed that Arabs and Turks do not have a productive function for the city outside the fruit and veg trade. Or that lazy immigrants which reject integration only live on state coffers and ‘*constantly produce new little head-scarf girls’*. This would be true for *’70 percent of the Turkish and 90 percent of the Arab population in Berlin*’ (Sarrazin 2009, N.pag.). Those racist statements got him into trouble in his position as board member of the *Bundesbank* and he had to agree to not again arouse the public contrary to the values of the *Bundesbank*. Which of course he did with his book, resulting in his dismissal from the *Bundesbank*.

4.5.1 The Public Debate Around "Deutschland schafft sich ab"

The period following the publication can be characterised by the strong condemnation of Sarrazin's theses by all political parties (Meng 2015, 104). The outrage was very similar to the one caused by Friedrich Merz when he used the term *Leitkultur for the first time*, where it was put in doubt if such a framing can advance the debate in any way. In this part of the chapter I therefore trace the 'political success of a counter discourse (…) with reference to the extent to which it manages to be articulated with and within competing discourses in the public realm' (Zienkowski 2017, VI).

One major move within the debate was to denounce Sarrazin's more extreme statements and then quickly draw attention to the fact that he had "spoken out a hurtful truth" about some "problems" that the political class had ignored for too long. In other words, with regards to the "problems" that Sarrazin talked about many agreed he was right, such as the lack of will to integrate from a majority of migrants or the difficulties that come along with being a country of immigration; only his rhetoric was despicable (Kuhn and Wamper 2011, 252; Hess 2011, 40).[65]

In that way, Sarrazin's ideas were circulated and mainstreamed by other political actors and started to enter the public consciousness as new common-sense. We can see here, how in a moment of reactivation, immediately the process of sedimentation follows, where many political actors agree on the definition of the "problem". And that problem was "failed integration"; a failed integration where

[65] Interestingly, this was later also to become the reaction by the mainstream parties when the AfD was on the rise, where it was assumed that AfD had found a niche in the electorate which was concerned around immigration, that those fears have to be taken seriously but AfD rhetoric was not conducive in solving the problem. The same argument is used to defend the mind-bogglingly large interest of political talk shows to discuss issues around integration, immigrants, and Islam as I discuss in Chapter 6.

homogenised foreign others were to blame for not having picked up the opportunities offered by a fantasmatic, pure German society.

The efficacy of Sarrazin's contribution becomes visible through examples where politicians lend legitimacy to his theses of whom we would not expect to do so. This is one of the ways we can measure the success of a counter-discourse, as stated with Zienkowski above, or as Moffitt states that we can measure the acceptance of claims by way how those in positions of power talk about an event or narrative.[66] While conservative politicians have attempted at different times in the past to politicise the "foreigner" and "integration issues" (see Pautz 2005), these topics were now also seized upon by politicians of the left.[67] From now onwards, also mainstream politicians outside the right fringes of the CDU/CSU joined the chorus of voices that discerned essential differences between Germans and foreigners and prophesised doom if the "failure of integration" were to go on unchecked. Thus, the former Minister of Education for the SPD, Klaus von Dohnanyi, defended Sarrazin in an interview with the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (2011). Dohnanyi laments that in Germany one loses one's social status, becomes ostracised, when one '*mentions the obvious*' and that no one in their right mind can deny that specific cultural traits exist within groups of people (*Volksgruppen*).

Another public figure who jumped to Sarrazin's defence was Joachim Gauck, who was proposed as the candidate for German President by the SPD and Greens in 2010, where he narrowly lost to CDU candidate Christian Wulff, but took office after the latter's resignation from 2012 till 2017. He called Sarrazin's work '*courageous'* for

[66] See my introduction or Moffitt (2017, 417).
[67] It has to be mentioned that, nevertheless, multiple attempts were made to ban Sarrazin from the SPD, which only came to fruition in 2020, ten years after the publication. In a surprising twist, shortly after he was booted from the SPD, he managed to convince the arguably most influential politician on the left since re-unification, Oskar Lafontaine, to join him for a discussion around his new book. Lafontaine is one of the co-founders of the party "The Left".

speaking more '*openly about* ***a problem that exists in society*** *than the political class does*' (Tagesspiegel 2010). In a similar vein, another former statesman, SPD chancellor Helmut Schmitt pointed out that Sarrazin made some mistakes in his presentation, but that overall he '**addressed many problems correctly** and triggered a discussion that was urgently needed' (quoted in Meng 2015, 117, my emphasis).

Also Sigmar Gabriel, chairman of the SPD from 2009 until 2017, copied one of the moves from Sarrazin (and later the far-right generally) by drawing an equivalence from a few, highly publicised cases with an unquantifiable mass of people who supposedly refuse to integrate. He argued that '*those who reject all offers of integration cannot stay in Germany just as hate preachers on the payroll of foreign countries cannot*' (der Spiegel 2010a). Gabriel echoes here earlier comments made by the Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière (CDU), who claimed that 10 to 15 percent of immigrants reject integration – without explaining where he got these numbers from or who even counts as an "integration rejecter" (*Integrationsverweiger*).[68] Similarly, the social democratic politician Joachim Pöss - one of the longest serving MPs, sitting in the *Bundestag* from 1980 till 2017 - argued in favour of '*taking the voiced sorrows and fears seriously*' (quoted in Friedrich 2011, 13). We should understand these statements around the unintegratable immigrant as examples of the cultural racism that is part of Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's (2018) wider understanding of "colour-blind racism" that has replaced "Jim Crow racism" in our contemporary societies. Colour-blind racism is important, because it is more likely to be uttered from those higher on the social ladder and the more educated. Whereas far-right parties are more overtly racist, the colour-

[68] Quoted in a „small enquiry" of the Left fraction in the *Bundestag*. In the document they also draw attention to the fact that the president of the Ministry of Migration and Refugees has put the number of "integration rejecters" at around 1 percent (Deutscher Bundestag 2011).

blind racism is more veiled, yet its constant repetition radically narrows the gap to what was previously considered extreme.

In summary, after a brief period of shock, a vast part of the political class applauded Sarrazin's efforts for bringing a formerly taboo topic into society's view. His 'book was quickly seized upon as a generally useful, if at times errant, examination of the "problem" of failed integration' (Meng 2015, 105). Now that the "problem" was established, we can turn to a second set of effects of the Sarrazin debate, a re-orientation in the understanding of integration, which thereby paved the way for a new conceptualisation of *Leitkultur*.

The literature accounts for this in the rather vague terms of Sarrazin making novel viewpoints "speakable" and the related contention that the integration discourse "shifted to the right", but I want to put these ideas on a stronger (discourse-) theoretical foundation. Let's look at the two issues in turn. One, the literature agrees that 'Thilo Sarrazin bears a certain responsibility for allowing ideas, which were long taboo as racist, to again become "speakable" in the German public' (B. Weber 2016, 76) or that Sarrazin has widened the "field of speech" (Tsianos and Pieper 2011, 115). However, I consider these categorisations as too innocent, for the voicing of racist opinions has occurred before and after Sarrazin. What did change was the way people could identify with newly minted subject positions. All the talk about failed integration, immutable characteristics of migrants such as laziness or stupidity, and the increasing equalisation of the terms "migrants" and "Muslims" drove a wedge between pure, Christian Germans and non-Christian non-Germans. This made possible the articulation of the German way of life as under threat and in need of saving. Thereby, affective bonds to the necessarily empty signifier "Germanness" could be made, something that was until then considered the cardinal sin of German post-war identity

(Art 2006; Ewing 2008, 221). We will see in a moment why the signifier “Germanness” has to be empty. In short, the important change did not occur on the linguistic level, but rather on the level of possible identifications In discourse theoretical terms, the dislocation in the integration discourse via the Sarrazin debate enabled new identifications to take place.

4.5.2 Is Islam a Part of Germany? – Vignette I

But, turning now to the way the integration discourse shifted to the right, Weber (2016, 76) observes cogently that following the publication of the book ‘racist expressions and racialized descriptions of Islam have become increasingly part of the everyday speech of the center’. In our terms, became mainstreamed. Nowhere could this be seen better than in the reactions by elite actors to a statement the German President, Christian Wulff (CDU), made a couple of months after the publication of “*Deutschland schafft sich ab*”. A statement at that, which was some years earlier commonsensical and not controversial at all. This example goes to show once more how the horizon on which opinions and attitudes are understood and negotiated, has changed drastically.

What happened? On an emotionally charged day, October 3rd, 2010, at the 20-year anniversary speech for the re-unification of Germany, Wulff uttered the following fateful words, presumably reflecting on the still raging Sarrazin debate:

> Christianity is without a doubt part of German identity. Judaism is without a doubt part of German identity. Such is our Judaeo-Christian heritage. But Islam has now also become part of German identity (der Bundespräsident 2010, official translation).

Major civil society organisations, like the three main organising bodies of the religions in question, applauded Wulff’s remarks as well as the opposition parties of SPD, the

Greens, and the Left or the ruling coalition's Officer of Integration. But especially Wulff's own party, the CDU/CSU, and the wider media formulated major critiques.

Four days after Wulff's speech, his party colleague and long-time Prime Minister of Hesse, Volker Bouffier, said in the *Bundestag* that '*many people in this country do not consider the visible prevalence of foreign cultures an enrichment but rather as* ***a threat to their identity*****'**. He considered it

> *self-evident that the path to the future needs side rails, if it should not turn into a meander. Therefore: we have a Leitkultur. To this* ***Leitkultur*** *belongs especially a separation of state and church. This* ***is the antithesis to the Islamic Sharia****. It follows necessarily, that the Sharia cannot be the basis of successful integration in this country* (Deutscher Bundestag 2010, 6803, my emphasis)*.*

Another CDU politician, Hans-Peter Friedrich, who was to become Minister of the Interior five months later, also directly contradicted Wulff: *'The Leitkultur in Germany is the judeao-christian-occidental culture. It is not the Islamic one and won't be in the future. I don't sign off on the claim that Islam is part of our culture. I don't share this interpretation of the President*' (FAZ 2010b). Those are further examples of how mainstream politicians, following the publication of "*Deutschland schafft sich ab*", created an antagonistic frontier between a pure German society and a Muslim threat on the verge of subverting it. They felt propelled to respond in an already emotionally charged debate to a fairly innocent sentence - uttered by the highest representative of the German nation[69] - by referring to a radical-Islamic danger of punishment by Sharia as seemingly on the rise. And that "many people" are afraid of that occurring, even

[69] Interestingly, it wasn't even the case that Wulff could be said to be an "immigrant apologist" or that he was "ignoring the problems" that were, following the Sarrazin debate, almost universally agreed to be there. In his speech he quotes approvingly - and in a very Sarrazin-esque way - the controversial Berlin judge of one of the city's most notorious areas, Kirsten Heisig, that Germany's welfare state is not a self-service shop where one doesn't need to give something in return. Therefore, he also highlighted the by-now regularly inferred connection of "those migrants" who are unwilling to integrate but only want to draw money from German coffers.

though there are no signs for it nor actual statements made by Muslim organisations that the Basic Law should be replaced by Sharia.[70]

It follows, the ascription of Muslims in Germany wanting to be ruled according to the principles of the Sharia is an increasingly common form of racialisation and Islamophobia (Mondon and Winter 2017). Here, the demands of a – if anything – incredibly small part of a minority group are taken as the demands of the entire group. The essentialisation of cultures also comes to the fore when Friedrich juxtaposes the dominant culture with the Islamic one. For him, both are mutually exclusive and distinct, cannot become one, it is either/or. Curiously, in this moral panic creation, the amount of agency and power of the minority group in society is also vastly overstated. We will return in the next section on the second dislocation in more detail to questions of racism, racialisation, and moral panics.

But also the media, tabloid and broadsheet, jumped onto Wulff's statement – in rather affective ways. The weekly magazine *Focus* put a close-up of Wulff's head on its cover, including artificial moustache and a Taqiyah, a Muslim prayer hat, introducing the article with the large headline: '*My Germany… President Christian Wulff in cultural war*'.[71] Interestingly, while the tabloid BILD (2010) only asked a little critically: '*Why are you courting Islam so much, Mister President?*', the broadsheet FAZ (2010d) upped the ante and wrote martially that Wulff was '*fighting on behalf of Muslims*'.

One of the four editors of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* actually drew a connection between both events, the Sarrazin debate and the Wulff speech. Namely, Berthold Kohler complained that the President did not mention '*the many-voiced outcry*

[70] The overplayed threat of Sharia is created similarly to the one where it is said that the full veil, or burqa, will become the dominant choice of clothing for Muslim women in Germany, even though only 200-400 women are estimated to wear the full veil out of 4 million Muslim women. Nevertheless, fully veiled women are often found on print media covers or referred to by politicians.

[71] For a picture of the cover, see: https://www.horizont.net/news/media/4/Noch-greifen-die-Reformen-beim-Focus-nicht-32314-detailtop.jpeg, accessed 21/09/2022.

of the Germans against the witch-hunt against a man [Sarrazin], *who **clearly speaks from the inner soul of the people**'*. Or that the President's '*charming endeavour towards Muslims would rather bring not so few Germans to mount the barricades*' because he seems to have no idea '*how much the long-established population is feeling threatened by the **advancing Islam**, rightly so or not*' (FAZ 2010a, my emphasis).

Even considered in isolation, these statements and media representations seem radical. The elites purport to represent what many people think and worry about and in doing so are mainstreaming many of the "fears" the AfD would campaign about five years later. However, what makes the reaction to Wulff's speech especially interesting for the discourse analysts, is that another conservative politician four years earlier uttered for all intents and purposes the same words, without there being a large outcry by other politicians and the media. This shows, again, how much the horizon in Germany has changed

In 2006, the Minister of the Interior Wolfgang Schäuble (CDU), gave the opening speech of the first ever "Islam Conference". The conference was inaugurated to create a forum to talk about the state and challenges of members of the Islamic faith in German society and considered a crucial tool in the integration effort (Hernandez Aguilar 2018). There, he welcomed the faith by stating that '*Islam is a part of Germany and a part of Europe, it is part of our present and our future*' (die Welt 2006).

Crucially, those voices which felt impelled to contradict Wulff four years later to jump to the aid of "German identity" stayed silent (Friedrich 2011, 20). There was no outcry by politicians or the media that Schäuble courted the Muslim community or to have misrepresented the "reality" in German society (Frindte and Dietrich 2017; Steinberg 2018, 7). To account for this, I conducted a brief analysis with the newspaper

database “LexisNexis” on the number of newspaper articles published in Germany for the search terms “Schäuble AND Islam” and “Wulff AND Islam”. In both cases I chose a timeline of the two weeks after their respective speeches and the database finds 132 articles on Schäuble but 610 on Wulff. While not being a conclusive reference, this indicates how the former’s statement was passed over with considerably less reactions.

It quickly becomes clear that the debate is mainly an affective debate. On the logico-linguistic level it is rather obvious that Islam is a part of Germany. Even if there would only be a single mosque in the country it would be difficult to argue that Islam is not a part of Germany. Therefore, it becomes important to pay attention to how people invest in the statement that Islam belongs to Germany, with how much force that statement is denied, and what equivalences are drawn, such as the threat of jurisdiction by Sharia. This will be done in more detail below.

4.5.3 Towards Mainstream Acceptance of Leitkultur

But what is most crucial is that the change in the horizon following the Sarrazin debate described above also enabled a re-conceptualisation of *Leitkultur*. This will be helpful to counter some voices who have argued that the impact Sarrazin made has been over-estimated, that Sarrazin is merely a pessimist; longing for a lost, formerly glorious past (e.g., Rosellini 2019, 121). As we just saw, the initial reactions when *Leitkultur* entered public discourse was rejection and appalment. But in the months after the publication of Sarrazin’s book, politicians of the major parties now agreed that indeed, there was something like a *Leitkultur*. Now they only differed on the content of *Leitkultur* with their more conservative peers. But using the term no longer invoked a “firework of

racism". For example, Cem Özdemir, chairman of the Greens from 2008 till 2018, now tried to give *Leitkultur* a more narrow, legalistic meaning by saying that we already have a *Leitkultur*, which can be found in the constitution (FAZ 2010c). In a similar vein, Sigmar Gabriel also discovered the term *Leitkultur* for the SPD when he said that *Leitkultur* is written in Article 1 of the constitution, which says that human dignity is inviolable (Süddeutsche Zeitung 2010).

In sum, '*through the widening of the field of speech to the right, positions like the one of the "Leitkultur" were normalised'* (Friedrich 2011, 19). The Sarrazin debate is responsible for that while formerly the concept of 'integration carrie[d] multiple meanings', now 'its currently dominant iteration in national political discourse tends to emphasize adaptation, reinforce[s] cultural differences, and assume[s] that Germany's way of life needs to be protected' (Meng 2015, 119).

Yet even though the Sarrazin debate changed the horizon on which questions around integration were negotiated and understood, there was still the difficulty to give *Leitkultur* a positive content. This is also a major characteristic of the second dislocation I analyse – a dislocation which mainly furnished stronger affective bonds towards the need for a *Leitkultur*. While at the same time it is still unclear what *Leitkultur* even means.

4.6 Dislocation II – New Year's Eve in Cologne 2015/16

The other event that strongly influenced the integration debate in Germany and the demand for cultural homogeneity was the New Year's Eve of 2015/16 in Cologne and its subsequent public negotiation. This resulted in a major moral panic[72] and is

[72] The concept of "moral panics" is generally very rich (see Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994) and has been applied to an abundance of cases (see Cohen 2011; Hall et al. 2013). What I want to highlight with the

universally agreed on as having had a profound impact on German politics. The sentiment that Cologne was a “turning point” is widely shared in academia (Bielicki 2018; Boulila and Carri 2017), by the media (see e.g., der Spiegel International 2016), and by politicians. In the words of Volker Bouffier (CDU), ‘Cologne has changed everything’ (BBC 2016).

It is by now a main-stay of many discussions around complex issues such as integration, immigration, and cultural identities to have to “talk about Cologne” (B. Weber 2016; Hark and Villa 2017); it’s the elephant in the room that one cannot avoid. In many circles, especially to the left of the centre, the situation is similar to the “uncomfortable talk” that parents need to have with their children when they grow up. It is awkward for all participants, but it is necessary and cannot be ignored. Courage is needed so that we can finally get over with it and look towards the future. Or so the common-sense story goes.

What happened that night? Even after a parliamentary inquiry published a 1.352-page report (Landtag Nordrhein-Westfalen 2017) following 15 months of investigation; after the police analysed CCTV camera or mobile phone videos, and listened to countless witness statements, the events are still murky. What is clear is that a large mass of people gathered before midnight around the main train station and the large square in front of Cologne’s famous cathedral, which are close-by. The local police, with help from federal police, decided to disperse the crowds eventually. This was done to avoid a mass panic; some youths had been seen shooting firecrackers into the crowd. In a statement on January 1st, the police force described the night as peaceful like last year’s (Landtag Nordrhein-Westfalen 2017, 57). The number of crimes reported were similar to previous years, the force claimed at the time, and the

term is how a threat is blown out of proportion, especially when compared to similar events, how it was used to create strong antagonistic frontiers, and how it functioned as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

dispersion of the crowds around the train station was mentioned (Behrendes 2016, 330). Only later it emerged that from within that crowd, a large number of property and sexual crimes were committed, shielded from the understaffed police force. Lastly, the perpetrators were mainly young men, many of them not ethnic Germans.

But while, paradoxically, nowadays everyone "knows" what happened during that night, "Cologne" is also a notoriously murky signifier that can be laden with all kinds of explanations and meanings (Hark and Villa 2017, 9). In that vein, my goal is not to unearth what *really happened* during that night but rather to inquire what kinds of statements could be publicly made about it and how these influenced the horizon on which the far-right formulates its claims more generally. What I further argue is how, when the details were very unclear (they are still), mainstream politicians and the wider media – broadsheet or tabloid - already fixed meanings that were very much in line with the "dangers" the AfD has warned about since its radicalisation in 2015. This suturing of meaning can be understood as a production of a Laclauian *nodal point* (Hark and Villa 2017) in which the otherwise continuous sliding of meaning is arrested and a centre constructed (Laclau and Mouffe 2014). If there was ever a doubt about the "un-integrable" foreign other, following "Cologne" the genie of demanding a *Leitkultur* couldn't be put back into the bottle.[73]

[73] The details of the night are incredibly complex, and I aim to highlight these complexities as opposed to telling a straight-forward story when I talk about it and the ensuing debate.

4.6.1 The Terms of the Moral Panic - "Fair Game", "Running the Gauntlet", and "Organised Crime"

In the early days of the moral panic there were three major points of reference: a Facebook post, a press conference, and an anonymous report by a "whistle-blower" police officer. It began with a single, fairly innocuous Facebook post, published in a neighbourhood self-help type group with thousands of users called "*Nett-Werk Köln*".[74] One user alleged there that sexual assaults had happened within the crowds, perpetrated by immigrants. He further claimed that following the refugee influx, women in Germany were increasingly becoming "fair game" (*Freiwild*). The national and international press took over that wording and thereby set the stage for the ensuing interpretations in the days to come (Goeßmann 2019, 109–10).[75] Though inappropriate sexual advances were also mentioned, nevertheless the media coverage in the early days focussed on petty-crimes such as pick-pocketing and minor violent quarrels that happened throughout Cologne (Boulila and Carri 2017, 287).

The crucial event that set the media coverage spiralling was a press conference held by the Cologne police force on January 4th only. During which they admitted that the formerly anecdotal evidence and rumours were largely correct, something terrible had happened that night. To get a clearer picture, the police chief of Cologne asked for every victim to come forward to the police (Landtag Nordrhein-Westfalen 2017, 471). What interests the discourse theorist here is the magnitude of the crimes

[74] The name can be roughly translated as "niceness-factory Cologne", it is a pun of the German "*nett*", "nice" and "*Netzwerk*", or "network".

[75] Many researchers come across a publication that they wished they had written themselves while researching for their own project. For me, this publication is Goeßmann's (2019) *The Invention of the Threatened Republic* (translated title), from which I draw extensively.

purported to have happened and the particular focus on the perpetrators – which lead me to discerning a moral panic.

Following an internal police report from January 2nd, the majority of the crowd was identified as refugees, 'without any confirmation whatsoever' on their immigration status (der Spiegel International 2016). Yet the Cologne chief of police Wolfgang Albers declared that the perpetrators were of Arab or North African origin and that the attacks amounted to a '*new dimension of violence*' (Landtag Nordrhein-Westfalen 2017, 478). The Interior Minister of Northrhine-Westphalia also accused North African refugees of organised sexual attacks on defenceless women (Landtag Nordrhein-Westfalen 2017, 484), just as Minister of Justice Heiko Maas spoke of '*a completely new dimension of organised crime*' on January 5th, repeated it on January 10th via an interpellation: '*no one can tell me that this wasn't coordinated or prearranged*' (Wiermer and Voogt 2016, 202). The head of the Federal Crime Agency (BKA), Holger Münch, discerned the organised character of the attacks solely due to the fact that some of the perpetrators travelled from other places to Cologne (die Zeit 2016). However, both the refugee claim and the claim of the organised, planned character of the attacks were later shown in the fact-finding mission to have been '*pressing ahead rather strongly*' (Goeßmann 2019, 117) without evidence. Various prosecutors testified that they did not find any evidence concerning organised and coordinated attacks, even after surveying a telecommunications dataset containing 1.6 million data points (Landtag Nordrhein-Westfalen 2017, 603–5).

Apart from the supposedly organised character of the attacks, their described magnitude also contributed to the moral panic. Even while what had exactly happened was still unclear at the time. Crucial here was an anonymous "whistle blowing" report by a police officer on duty that night (published in full by die Welt 2016a). Dated the 4th

of January, it was presented in newspapers as a “mission-experience-report” (*Einsatzerfahrungsbericht*). This neologism purposefully mixed a subjective vantage point - an experience - with a seemingly formal document - an officially sanctioned, objective, mission report. The informal and clearly not official origin of the “report” shows due to its simple grammar mistakes and slack use of language.[76]

Nevertheless, the media did not question the details of the report at all, but copied its content almost one-to-one; finally having found “evidence” for the supposed silencing about the night’s happenings. Before, ‘*for one week the truth was only available below the counter.*’ Now, *‘it came to light piece by piece, because police officers on duty began to talk*’ (quoted in Goeßmann 2019, 110), even though it was only one officer. The influential tabloid BILD (2016) described the report as a ‘*document of helplessness and horror*’ and headlined it with the title “*The secret police protocol*”, again lending it more official legitimacy. *Die Welt* (2016a) published the document in full and labelled it “police-document” on their website. Similarly, *Spiegel* calls it an ‘internal protocol of the police’ that ‘has revealed the full extent of the violence in Cologne’ (der Spiegel International 2016).

However, the “police report” should rather be seen as a “diary entry” by a single individual. If the police officer was so shocked about the amount and severity of the crimes, why did he wait until January 4th to write down his experience of the night? Wouldn’t it have been easier to recollect the details while the memory was still fresh? Interestingly, the “whistle blower” claims in the document that the police were notified by the public before 10.45pm of many assaults and sexual violence. But when testifying in front of the fact-finding mission, he claimed to have been aware of only one incident of theft including sexual harassment by 10.45pm (Landtag Nordrhein-

[76] See for example, the ending of the following sentence: ‘… *due to clearly massive alcohol consumption and other intoxicating substances (e.g., joint)*’ (die Welt 2016a).

Westfalen 2017, 265; see also Goeßmann 2019, 111). When the various police forces discussed next steps at around 11pm, he also did not mention that sexual crimes were occurring and only considered the situation as a whole dangerous, with an emphasis on the use of fireworks (Landtag Nordrhein-Westfalen 2017, 266). He again exaggerated when he wrote in the "protocol" that on his way towards the train station he was confronted with disconcerted citizens and crying children but testified to only have met one such family (Landtag Nordrhein-Westfalen 2017, 247–48).

Notwithstanding its inconsistencies, the lasting effect of the report can be gauged by the almost automatic copying of the author's term "running the gauntlet" (*Spießrutenlauf*) by German and international media, just as it happened before with *Freiwild*. With the German usage being similarly rare as the English one, it is very easy to trace the hundreds of articles back to the "mission-experience-report" and its unverifiable or inconsistent claims. While some media outlets made it clear that they were quoting the report with this curious wording, others just took it up as their own, such as the BBC (BBC 2016): 'The stories of women running a gauntlet of sexual assault by young men have tapped into society's deepest fears'.

As a whole, we can say that the public outrage in the early days of January functioned as a self-fulfilling prophecy.[77] There was talk about a "new dimension of violence" when in reality the official case numbers registered at the police was fairly low. We need to remember that at first the police was unable to grasp the full extent of the events; they had tweeted of a largely peaceful night early on January 1st. Only after the press conference on January 4th, in which the public was encouraged to come forward with accusations and information, did the number of cases increase drastically,

[77] For the already referred to similarities regarding the rise of the far-right in Denmark and the characteristic of a moral panic being a self-fulfilling prophecy, see Mondon and Winter (Mondon and Winter 2020, 75).

especially sexual crimes. Only 19 out of the total of 291 alleged sexual crimes were registered with the police until the 2nd of January, with the rest coming in after the press conference (Goeßmann 2019, 123–24).

The claim I make here, and which goes counter to the official interpretation of the event, is that what happened on New Year's Eve was not a "new dimension of crime" but largely due to the encouragement and public outrage, more victims than during other large-scale celebrations came to the fore. Especially when it relates to sexual crimes against women as these are often strongly under-reported.[78] In criminological terms, the "dark field" of crimes that may have gone unreported without the press conference and public attention was illuminated.

This is because the officially reported numbers of sexual crime in years previously strongly mirror the ones from the "scandalous night" – but prior to the press conference. During New Year's Eve of the years 2012 and 2013, for example, there were each 22 charges of sexual assaults pressed (Goeßmann 2019, 98). But, crucially, in those early days when the official number of charges pressed were still within the yearly averages, the moral panic wave took on speed: the editor-in-chief of the public TV station covering the area around Cologne (WDR - West German Broadcasting Cologne), made a public statement in the main evening news of January 5th.[79] She alluded to the already mentioned "new dimension of violence", that the space around the train station was a "*lawless*" "*area of fear*", where not only the "*honour of women*" was stolen but even the "*state-of-law*" itself robbed. At this point, the only difference to previous years was that while there was a similar number of sexual assaults, this time they were mostly perpetrated by immigrants.

[78] I thank Daniela Bracke for pointing this further dimension out to me.
[79] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AL4ZZ05e6D4, accessed 21/09/2022.

Another allegation, then, was that the public, “left-leaning” media also down-played the scope of the crimes and shielded immigrants from scrutiny. This allegation is one of the main-stay of the far-right in Germany, from AfD to PEGIDA and even the never-disappearing NPD, all of which claim that the German press is a “lying press” (*Lügenpresse*) (see Schellenberg 2016, 325–27; Lilienthal and Neverla 2017). After Cologne, mainstream politicians lashed out in a similar direction, such as Hans-Peter Friedrich (we know him as the Interior Minister during the Sarrazin debate). He diagnosed a “*scandal*” due to a “*cartel of silence*” within the publicly funded media and his party colleague Andreas Scheuer, General Secretary of the Bavarian CSU, argued that ‘*societal polarisation should not be risked out of misguided cautiousness in media reporting*’ (der Spiegel 2016b).

We need to keep in mind here the dates at which the police and media outlets work on full capacity. The 1st of January is a public holiday in Germany, January 2nd that year was a Saturday, a notoriously slow day for media outlets, while on Sunday the newspapers were written for Monday the 4th. Hence, there was a natural delay in reporting.

In her PhD thesis, Heike Haarhoff researched precisely the print news media coverage in the wake of the evening and concluded that 84 percent of over 1.000 news articles mention the ethnic background of the perpetrators. Every outlet, either regional or national, left-leaning or right-leaning, mentioned the origin of the attackers at least in 75 percent of their articles (Haarhoff 2020, ch. 6). Similarly, in her analysis of 97 TV news segments of the two biggest public broadcasters, ARD and ZDF in January 2016, Ricarda Drüeke (2016, 33–34) found that the broadcasters’ coverage focused singularly on frames which identified migrants and asylum seekers as perpetrators and connected sexual violence with specific cultures who brought the “novel” phenomenon

from the outside into German society. This is not exactly the “cartel of silence” which former Interior Minister Friedrich alleged. However, these analyses are completed way after the event and have a hard time entering public consciousness *post factum*. Instead, one senior journalist at the newspaper FAZ called out the public TV channels mentioned and their supposed protective image of immigrants as ‘*the opposite of journalism’* (FAZ 2016).

Therefore, not only the private, but also the public media took part in the creation of the moral panic. ‘The events were quickly coined the “Terror of Cologne” not only by politicians of the far Right but also by quality media outlets’ (Boulila and Carri 2017, 288). The degree of dramatization can also be gauged by looking at the headlines of some news reporting such as “*Fair Game between Cathedral and Train Station*”, “*Inhibitions Completely Let Lose*”, “*They Snatched Her Slip From Her Body*”, “*Day 6 Following the Excess*” (all quoted from Goeßmann 2019, 98–99). Indeed, social polarization took place, but not the one Scheuer was talking about where the media supposedly downplayed the crimes.

4.6.2 All Quiet on the Home Front

The amount of coverage becomes especially outrageous – and the characterisation of a moral panic clearer - when compared to other public festivals where, unfortunately, many sexual crimes are committed. The event most often used to put the media coverage of Cologne into context is the - for sexual harassment notoriously famous - *Oktoberfest*. While reducing these horrific acts to blank numbers isn’t intended to minimise the harms done in any way, but Goeßmann (2019, 100–102) has found that there were five media mentions of four charged rapes during the *Oktoberfest* just prior

to Cologne. But, crucially, within the first four days after Cologne, 531 articles reported on the, back-then, two charged rapes. Therefore, one act of rape supposedly perpetrated by an immigrant in Cologne received 200-times as much media coverage as one during *Oktoberfest*.[80] This, once more, shows again that no downplaying and ignoring took place.

In that vein, the former Minister for Families Kristina Schröder[81] (CDU) tweeted on January 4th that '*it was taboo for a long time, but we have to talk about the violence-legitimating male norms in Muslim culture'*.[82] Also when Bassam Tibi, inventor of the *Leitkultur* concept, writes after Cologne that '*patriarchaly inclined men from a misogynistic culture can't be integrated*' (die Welt 2016b), he is talking about the foreign other – but is silent regarding the transgressions by Germans. However, academics and activists rightly relativize and contextualise - not trivialise - the events in Cologne with everyday misogyny prevalent in German society. Sexual violence is wide-spread in German society - according to a study back in 2004, almost 60 percent of German women claim to have experienced sexual violence in their lives (der Spiegel International 2016). I argue that the incidents in Cologne were used to renew the call for a *Leitkultur* because supposedly the immigrant suspects lack respect towards female bodily autonomy, the authority of the police, and the rule of law. All of which were supposedly safeguarded in German society and part of its mutual understanding.

Yet this fantasmatic image or ego-protection mechanism (see A. Freud 1992), the untainted image of a pure, non-violent German culture, does not hold up under

[80] This is part of a general trend of the media to cover immigrant crime way more often than crimes committed by nationals. For many years the ratio was about 1:10 – for 1 crime committed by a German, 10 crimes committed by foreigners are mentioned in the news media. This doesn't take into account yet that there are way more Germans than foreigners in the country, making the "danger" of immigrant crime seem even larger (see Chapter 5).

[81] She had in the fall of 2010 contributed to the Sarrazin debate by claiming one should also pay attention to the "German-phobia" and racism directed towards Germans by migrants.

[82] See https://twitter.com/schroeder_k/status/684113837545623552?lang=de, accessed 21/09/2022.

scrutiny. Rape within a marriage is a chargeable offence in Germany only since 1997. Back then, 138 MPs still voted against it, including Friedrich Merz, the *Leitkultur* advocate and Horst Seehofer, Minister of the Interior from 2018-2021 (correctiv 2018). It follows, those "Samaritans" who come to the aid of victims of sexual crimes in Cologne, committed by non-Germans, are the same who considered sexual violence by Germans within a marriage not an offence at all. This is a clear indicator for the mainstreaming of a racialized conception of sexual violence. It is also a prime example of the connection between Islamophobia and "femonationalism",[83] understood as a powerful discursive formation that brings together racialized understandings of cultures and their different treatment of women under the over-arching notion of gender equality (Mondon and Winter 2017, 2167). What the signifier femonationalism draws attention to is the problematic linking of women's rights with nationalist-exclusionary rhetoric that ignores existing transgressions at home.

Indeed, women's rights activists in Germany had demanded a strengthening of sexual violence laws many years before Cologne. According to the criminal code at the time, the legal threshold to commit an act of sexual coercion (*sexuelle Nötigung*) was rather high and required a victim to physically resist against unwanted advances. A vocalised "no" was insufficient and this was critiqued for many years with the slogan "no means no" (Bezjak 2016). This was actually one of the reasons why so few offenders could be prosecuted for their acts of violence Cologne. It was almost

[83] Closely related to femonationalism is also a "homonationalism", where far-right parties present themselves opportunistically as gay-friendly because it helps them to make their Islamophobia more palatable for less radically interpellated individuals. While preaching at the same time the importance of the "nuclear family", understood as one man and one woman and their children.

impossible for the prosecutors to prove the high requirements like a forceful defence of victims to sentence offenders.[84]

Indeed, a task-force was founded earlier in 2015 to reform the criminal code to address precisely these issues. But its official recommendations were not taken into account because lawmakers enacted some changes immediately after Cologne and before the task-force finished its work. They nevertheless finally included the "no means no" approach. Additionally, two new crimes were introduced. One covered those actions which didn't quite meet the threshold of "sexual coercion" and were subsumed under the long-campaigned for crime of "sexual harassment" (*sexuelle* Belästigung). The other focussed on "offenses out of groups" (*Straftaten aus Gruppen*).[85]

Only after the reformation of the criminal code was Germany able to finally ratify the Istanbul Convention which aims to combat and prevent violence against women on 12 October 2017 – six years after officially signing it.[86] This also shows that migrants did not attack a pure and virtuous culture as the latter was already tainted and had only paid lip service to women's rights for a long time. Yet Minister of Justice Maas (CDU) tweeted on January 5th of a '*breach of civilisation* [*Zivilisationsbruch*] *by a horde without inhibitions'*.[87] Therefore, there are, on the one hand, events in which sexual violence towards women is treated as a clear example between the incommensurability of cultures. Yet, on the other hand, events like *Oktoberfest* where sexual violence plays a constitutive role are excused and ignored.

[84] In the aftermath only three suspects were sentenced for sexual crimes and in total 32 trials ended with a conviction. Most convictions were for theft and robbery and, amongst Germans, nationals from Algeria, Morocco, and Iraq were prosecuted most (der Spiegel 2019).
[85] According to legal experts this crime was solely added to please the crowds as it does not represent a common crime and is already covered with laws on abettors of crimes (Bezjak 2016, 569; Nobis 2018).
[86] See https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/germany, accessed 21/09/2022.
[87] See https://twitter.com/heikomaas/status/684746029032411136, accessed 21/09/2022

In short, both the public and private media in their coverage on Cologne and mainstream politicians claim that there was a new dimension of violence by immigrants on display, that the reality of letting many of them into the country in the summer of 2015 finally called up, and that we finally need to talk about the previously taboo topic of the attitudes of Muslim men towards women (see also the parallel to the Sarrazin debate).[88] But the hurtful attitudes of German men towards women were never part of the discussion.[89] The danger to women either is abroad or comes from abroad, but never from the majority population, never during *Oktoberfest*.

4.6.3 Two Newspaper Covers – Vignette II

However, this framing not only occurred in written content or on television screens but also very graphically on newspaper and magazine covers. In the two following examples (Picture 4.1 below), a foreign threat is again being portrayed and directed against pure, helpless German women. One, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (2016b) introduced an interview with the psychologist Ahmad Mansour in their weekend edition of 09./10. January 2016 accompanied by an image where a black arm is artfully created in between the outline of two white legs, with the hand firmly placed in the crotch area. The interview was further advertised on Facebook with the same image occupying the entire front page (in the printed version it is less prominent) and the

[88] A similar process also occurs in other societies which have seen a revival of the far-right, as Mondon and Winter (2020, 92) contend regarding France. 'These self-described "taboo-breakers" are everywhere – on television, in newspapers, on social media; yet they often claim to be subject to the diktat of the left and of political correctness'.

[89] One particular attempt to frame the debate of sexual violence towards women following Cologne in more general terms was the #*ausnahmslos* (#noexcuses) campaign where more than 400 prominent politicians, especially from the Social Democrats, Greens, and the Left, but also individuals from the cultural sector and academics, like Angela Davis, rallied 'against sexualised violence and racism. Always. Anywhere.' and not 'only when the perpetrators are allegedly the perceived "others": Muslim, Arab, black or North-African men, i.e., those who are regarded as "non-Germans" by extremists'. See https://ausnahmslos.org/english, accessed 21/09/2022

caption that '*many young Muslims cannot face the other sex without stress. Those are every time highly sexualised situations. That is also the ground for the excess of Cologne*'.[90] While this is a direct quote from the interview, it is depicted without quotation marks in the ad and seems rather like a general statement the SZ wants to make on the events. By referring to "many young Muslims" who supposedly have problems in dealing with women and not once discussing problems concerning Germans – only Machismo in Latin America or gang rapes in India are mentioned - it is a further exemplification of how the issue is located firmly with a clearly demarcated, foreign, other. After public outcry the SZ issued an apology where they accepted that the image indeed depicted a black man and a white female body in a stereotypical manner, relating sexual violence to skin colour (Süddeutsche Zeitung 2016a).

But, two, a cover page of the weekly magazine *Focus* upped the ante considerably. Here a naked, blonde, highly sexualised woman is depicted with black handprints all over her body. The title of the main story covers her private parts and reads: '*Women indict – After sex attacks from migrants: Are we still tolerant or already blind?*'. However, this time the editorial staff did not apologise but instead doubled down on their story via the editor-in-chief. He claimed in a statement that *Focus* only '*depicts what unfortunately happened*' and that everyone who criticises the cover '*is afraid of the truth*' (Tagesspiegel 2016). Putting the thought of criticising misogyny through the use of a misogynistic image to the side, this is another incidence, like in the Sarrazin debate, where an actor claims via interpellations to *just show what reality is like* and that everyone who shies away from it is a coward. In that vein, the element of construction of reality gets lost and one particular interpretation becomes normalised and sedimented.

[90] The Facebook post is not available anymore but the screenshot shown in Picture 1.

Image 4.1 Two newspaper covers[91]

4.6.4 Mainstreaming Far-Right Claims

Generally, the structure of the Sarrazin debate and the very similar diagnoses following Cologne popularised by politicians and the media are the 'shifting conditions [that] allow such images to suddenly appear in mainstream publications' (B. Weber 2016, 69). They change the horizon on which the far-right then can fruitfully formulate its (even more extreme) claims and are part of the conditions of possibility which make far-right claims understandable. It took a dislocatory event like the New Year's Eve of Cologne to make the connection of the dangerous, foreign other "real" while far-right

[91] Sources: personal screenshot from a Facebook post by the official "Süddeutsche Zeitung" Facebook Page and for the Focus cover, see https://p6.focus.de/img/fotos/id_5197352/focus02-2016.jpg?im=Resize%3D%28800%2C998%29&hash=2e6e0f41783e840368b1d838d17589c567df31447eeb1bc9e9e7a93689ff06, accessed 21/09/2022.

political actors, especially during the third wave of far-right support in the 1990s, failed to make that link credible and "grip" subjects.

As we can imagine, the AfD articulated the events of Cologne as part of a general trend. A trend, they claimed, had existed at least since the migration movements of 2015 but now there was "proof" – "Germanys biggest fears became true". Björn Höcke, the fascist leader of the Thuringia fraction of AfD,[92] painted an even darker picture when he wrote on Facebook that '[t]he events at the Cologne train station on New Years' Eve gave our country a taste of the looming collapse of culture and civilization' (der Spiegel International 2016). He further articulated equivalential chains that connect many of the issues discussed above around failed integration, being blind to the "problems" that came with the migration movements in 2015, and the incommensurability between German values and those of the foreign others:

> In the name of the women of Cologne, in the name of the refugee helpers whose naivety was shamelessly taken advantage of, in the name of the German schoolchild who is bullied every day in his multikulti class, in the name of the police who are insulted and ridiculed daily, in the name of the countless who can walk through their city only with lowered heads, I declare: We want to live by our values and mores, we want to preserve our culture, we do not want to go back to the Middle Ages, we want to keep our country! (quoted in S. Kim 2017, 7).

But, as I have hinted at multiple times, these cases of extreme polarisation between pure Germans who just want to live their own way of life and an antagonistic, foreign, dangerous other are no longer to be found only on the fringes of public discourse. Instead, they have made it into the mainstream - just as during the Sarrazin debate. Or, to be more accurate – in line with our understanding of the mainstream as contingent itself - what *counts* as mainstream has changed, what *can* be articulated without repercussion. The degree of essentialisation and cultural racism is visible in a

[92] See footnote 11.

mind-boggling op-ed for the *Wall Street Journal* where Josef Joffe, the publisher-editor of the respectable weekly *die Zeit*, joins the incommensurability claim:

> Young Christian males also don't always obey Miss Manners when travelling in packs. But their culture does not have a word for *taharrush gamea*, as practiced in some Arab lands: a group-grope where young men encircle women to jeer, molest, and rob them (Wall Street Journal 2016).[93]

Just as in the SZ article with the infamous black-hand-white-crotch image where it was claimed that many immigrants can't face the other sex unstressed, an antagonistic distinction is made that radically simplifies social reality and places young men into two distinct groups: Germans *who sometimes and only accidentally* overstep boundaries - possibly under the influence of alcohol in holiday destinations like the Balearic island of Mallorca - and (mainly) Muslim others *whose culture inherently legitimises* violence against women. By virtue of mere group membership, these natural and immutable norms then also guide conduct in Germany. During this process the Muslim other becomes "abjected" (Ewing 2008), as I will argue below.

This is a prime example of the increasing neo-racism which Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein have described so vividly. The neo-racists no longer draw objectifying and essentialising conclusions due to biological differences such as skin colour and race but rather due to belonging to supposedly essentially different cultures (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991). Bassam Tibi's op-ed on the New Year's Eve quoted

---

[93] Joffe not only equates some perpetrators with entire cultures but even objectifies migrants as 'the next batch of 50,000 is due this month'. All of which leads him to claim that Merkel's famous "Yes, we can" has by now turned into a 'No, we can't'. This sentiment can even be found in academic analyses of the night. Udo Behrendes, formerly responsible for the coordination of the police in Cologne during New Year's Eve celebrations past, writes in Germany's most important criminological journal that '*those norms of masculinity and femininity acquired in their country of origin provide the lens through which we have to see the sexualised demonstrations of power against women, but also their male companions. Ultimately it came, also through the jostling in the crowd caused by the clearing of space through the police, to the from large public events in north-African and Arabic countries adapted behaviour of "Taharrush Gamea"*' (Behrendes 2016, 328).

above is aptly titled: '*Young men who bring the culture of violence with them*' (die Welt 2016b). All of the above leads to a mainstreaming of the culturalisation of sexual violence and the formation of a new common sense.

I argue that the effects of the public negotiations around what happened during the New Year's Eve of 2015 in Cologne had wide-spread consequences for the fortunes of the far-right and, therefore, for the whole political system in Germany. It figured as a point of no return for many established parties; their crossing of the Rubicon. By engaging in the rhetoric about the wide-spread disrespect of German laws, customs, and values by immigrants and refugees, they also joined the extreme form of Othering previously found only on the far-right fringe. Since Cologne, '[t]he racist language of the radical right is not confined to the right but has become increasingly normalised'. After the horizon was prepared first, as we have seen, by Thilo Sarrazin, who also 'bears a certain responsibility for allowing ideas, which were long taboo as racist, to again become "speakable" in the German public' (B. Weber 2016, 76).

The way the mainstream constructed reality was so fantasmatic that the *actual* reality did not even matter anymore. We could say that the interpretation of the event had already happened before it took place (see Faye 1977). The weekly *Spiegel* paradoxically picks up on that feature, but simply accepts and does not question any of it:

> In its entirety, the events of Cologne on New Year's Eve and in the days that followed adhered to **a script that many feared would come true even before it actually did. The pressure would be no less intense even if not a single one of the refugees and migrants who arrived in 2015 were among the perpetrators** (der Spiegel International 2016, my emphasis).

The sedimentation of the accepted *truth* of the event is therefore fulfilled and can't be questioned any more. A new common-sense is created. "Cologne" speaks for itself and by now can be used to legitimise almost anything, especially repressive laws targeting immigrants. As I said, a paradox of the event is that the politicians and the media had already made up their mind with all kinds of accusations. For example, concerning the "organised" character of the attacks announced by the Interior Minister and the head of the Federal Crime Agency that were dismissed only months later by the fact-finding mission without much public notice. Or the *Spiegel* which, while actively contributing to the moral panic, noting eight days after the night: 'And yet, it still isn't entirely clear what actually happened on New Year's Eve in Cologne' (der Spiegel International 2016).

4.7 Ten Theses on Leitkultur – Vignette III

But as we have seen in Figure 4.1, the public discussion on *Leitkultur* peaks in the election year of 2017, where the AfD entered the parliament as the first far-right party since World War II. The intervention that re-sparked the debate was a newspaper op-ed. by the Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière (CDU).[94] In the article, he discusses what *Leitkultur* actually means and provides ten theses as support. While he asks innocently the timeless questions of *'who are we? And who do we want to be*?' (all quotes from BILD 2017), he has already given the answer in the title. The title reads, in *Bild* typical large and bold letters, *'We are not Burqa*' ("*Wir sind nicht Burka*"*)* and is superimposed on a German flag. He takes up the debate in a Sarrazinesque way and

[94] To confirm this, I conducted a Lexis Nexis database analysis according to which 303 newspaper articles containing the word *Leitkultur* were published from the beginning of the year until the intervention on 27 April and 3.090 articles for the rest of the year. If the op-ed wasn't the cause that re-started the debate there should have been 1.131 and 2.262 articles for the respective time periods.

argues that there is something else besides a common language, the constitution, and respect for individual rights that *'connects us deeply, (…) makes us us, and (…) differentiates us from others'*. Followed by an interpellation: '*who would deny that here there are tried and tested habits that are worthy to be passed on. Hardly anyone*'.

His first proper thesis is also the most controversial. He proclaims that Germans call each other by name, shake hands, and that *'we show our face. We are not burqa*'. Although there are no official statistics available for burqa wearers in Germany, estimates put the number between 300 and 400, not taking tourists into account. If we compare this number to the around two million Muslim women in Germany, as the journalist Fabian Goldman did, it means that 99.985 percent of all Muslim women show their face; only 0.015 percent do not (der Spiegel 2016a).[95] And this percentage requires a passionate call for a *Leitkultur*? Through a journalistic piece that sets as its goal '*to invite a discussion*'? In an election year with a threatening far-right? It was about time that someone discussed these 0.015 percent who supposedly don't fit-in via the biggest German newspaper.

As mentioned before, also de Maizière struggles with the task to define what a positive German identity means. Besides his "we are not burqa" he only talks about abstract identifications - which most likely not even many "real" Germans have. Such as the legacy of Germany as a country of thinkers and writers, as if every proper German reads Goethe or Hegel. Additionally, he points out the need to consider Germany as part of the Western World, the EU, and NATO or to be aware of Germany's dark times. How a single individual fulfils these requirements is less clear,

[95] He also spoke to a diplomat at the Afghan embassy in Berlin who is in the country since 1969 and a diplomat for 20 years. That informant has not seen a single burqa wearer in Germany ever. Interestingly, he also quotes the Islamic scholar Andreas Ismail Mohr from the FU Berlin, who claims that the media had not picked up the notion of "burqa" until 2000 – the year of the first public *Leitkultur* intervention by Friedrich Merz.

just like others, such as the importance of education, Germany as a country that demands achievements, or the importance of the rule of law. Again, he is at the most concrete when saying what we are not: '*we do not connect conceptions of honour with violence*'. As if there would be a majority in parts of the immigrant population in which such a view would be dominant.

Yet the difficulty for established parties to make their call for a *Leitkultur* substantial and a part of their official programme can be shown by looking at the 2017 election manifestos. There is a surprising hesitation of parties which have stood-up for the concept, especially the CDU/CSU, to fully identify with it. Out of the six biggest political parties, the SPD, the Liberals, and the Left do not mention the term at all and the Greens distance themselves from it (BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN 2017, 112; 152). The CDU affirms a *Leitkultur* positively but stays on the abstract level where it refers to a freedom loving present and future, the importance of the German language in work and private life and, somewhat surprisingly, voluntary engagements in society as '*maybe the most valuable and important part of our Leitkultur*' (CDU/CSU 2017, 70–71). As can be easily imagined, after various individuals had mainstreamed the calls for a *Leitkultur*, the only party taking the case and running with it was the AfD. After intervening time and time again for 17 years, the CDU squarely left the ground it had prepared to the AfD, while AfD's arguments were virtually the same as the CDU's before the election campaign properly started.

The AfD officially affirms the concept in their section on "*German Leitkultur instead of 'Multiculturalism'*". Just like Sarrazin seven years earlier, they claim this is necessary because the '*civil society of functioning states are called upon to protect their cultures und develop them on their own*' and the only hope to win the '*in Europe already present cultural fight between occident and Islam as doctrine of salvation and*

carrier of non-integratable cultural traditions'. The responsibility of integration lies solely with the immigrant, again just like for Sarrazin. Everyone '*who receives a permanent right of residence has a duty to adapt to one's new homeland and the German Leitkultur, not the other way round*' (AfD 2017c, 47; 32). I hope to have shown that these statements, in similar words, have been uttered by mainstream actors over the course of the integration debate and therefore have become successfully mainstreamed. It follows, that we cannot distinguish anymore, in the case discussed here, between "far-right statements" and statements by other elites.

4.8 A Necessarily Empty *Leitkultur*

Based on the two dislocations described above – the debate around the publication of the book "Germany Abolishes Itself" and following the New Year's Eve in Cologne, I want to conclude by focussing on two further aspects of the *Leitkultur* debate: first, the difficulty of ascribing positive characteristics to a supposedly normatively desirable German identity and, second, the affective investment that is directed towards the need for *Leitkultur*.

I have at different points hinted at the impossibility of giving the concept of *Leitkultur* any positive content. Therefore, what is happening can be called, following Katherine Ewing, a process of abjection. With which she means an identity-securing strategy where those elements which are considered a threat to one's own identity are cast out (Ewing 2008, 3). The figure of the immigrant who is incommensurable with German culture and identity is then taken as the element which needs to be removed or stopped from entering the homeland so that the Germans can thrive again and live their way of life. Similarly, an operation is taking place where way the words "migrant"

and “Muslim” are increasingly made equivalential in public discourse and especially in media representations (Spielhaus 2011, 29–30).

When the attention is singularly focussed, from established political actors as well as the media, on the attacks on women by foreigners with the exclusion of everyday sexual violence perpetrated by Germans, the dangers the far-right has warned of seemingly become true. This black-and-white interpretation of a complicated social reality where its contingent elements are purged of the official account leads to a situation where

> [r]hetorical associations are made among objects and concepts that may be quite dissimilar, and the attention is drawn away from inconsistencies and logical slippages. As a result of this channelling, certain objects and signifiers acquire an otherwise unaccountably powerful emotional charge, often of horror, and others become nearly invisible (Ewing 2008, 9).

Ever since the end of the Second World War, different political projects have tried to ascribe a positive German identity and formulated their central claims around it, many of them on the far-right fringe. All of them failed. Until a discussion around *Leitkultur* changed that horizon on which German values and Germanness as a whole are negotiated. This occurred, still, in a situation where a definition of “Germanness” can only be provided by pointing out what *is not* German (Jens Schneider 2001, 355). Especially since Merz’ intervention in 2000, the discussion on the ‘construction of national identity largely occurred ex negativo: one was what one was not’ (Manz 2004, 481).

During the Sarrazin debate, conceptions of essential differences between Germans and immigrants received wide-spread support for the first time. Then the very graphic moral panic around the incommensurability between different cultures following the New Years Eve of 2016 in Cologne, where “Germanys biggest fears

became true", changed the horizon on which the far-right then successfully formulated its claims around the need for cultural homogeneity. Claims, that were made by other far-right parties in the past but disregarded in the population then.

The only way we can reconcile this paradox of the difficulty to ascribe positive content to Germanness but that there is nevertheless an increased need of doing so, is by understanding the demand for *Leitkultur* through affective investments. The picture of the immigrant who does not want to integrate and who's own culture is incommensurable with the German one figures as a threat to Germany's way of life. We can link the argument here to Žižek's notion of "The Nation Thing", by which he means the shared affective bonds that structure a community, especially in the face of adversity.[96] This emotional investment into a fantasmatic Thing is clearly at play in the later stages of the integration debate; *Leitkultur* can only be understood as a prototypical Thing because it

> appears as what gives plenitude and vivacity to our life, and yet the only way we can determine it is by resorting to different versions of an empty tautology: all we can say about it is, ultimately, that the Thing is 'itself', 'the real Thing', 'what it really is about', and so on. If we are asked how we can recognize the presence of this Thing, the only consistent answer is that the Thing is present in that elusive entity called 'our way of life'' (Žižek 1990, 52).

The impersonal, male immigrant is responsible for the impending demise of Germany, standing in the way between the Germans and their Enjoyment, their safety and material comforts. For Sarrazin, he is a burden for the state, should be unproductive somewhere else, and not make so many headscarf girls (Sarrazin 2009, n.p.). While since Cologne the (Muslim) immigrant makes a mockery of German laws and customs.

[96] His context are the failed attempts to realise "proper" democracy in the former Soviet States and the violence in the Balkan region.

We can clearly see that these interpellations belong to the horrific dimension of fantasy (Žižek 1998; Glynos and Howarth 2007) – if the danger is not averted, doom will follow.

> '*I don't want the country of my grandchildren and great-grandchildren to be majority Muslim, that people speak mainly Turkish and Arabic, that women wear a headscarf und that the daily rhythm is regulated by the shouts of the muezzins. If I want to experience that, I can book a holiday in the Orient*' (Sarrazin 2010, 308).

The demand for cultural homogeneity as put forward trough the *Leitkultur* debate then figures as the beatific dimension of fantasy – if all immigrants were to subscribe to a proper German *Leitkultur* or leave the country, Germany would finally be reconciled and the fullness-to-come no longer a utopia. The desire for this utopia (and its impossibility) is nicely shown by the following example Kim (2017, 8) gives: the AfD leader for Berlin, Georg Pazderski claimed that Turkish-Germans have to integrate and read AfD's manifesto in German. Interestingly, Russian-Germans do not as it is readily translated, which the AfD section of Brandenburg even points out proudly as being the only party to do so (AfD Brandenburg 2014).

Without having been provoked by a far-right challenger, the established political parties and especially the conservative CDU have, therefore, by increasingly subscribing and campaigning for a *Leitkultur* since 2000, changed the horizon upon which the far-right formulates its (formerly considered radical) claims. The media, whether it is print or television, public or private, left- or right-leaning, has to a large degree played its part in the moral panic creation around the "failure" of integration and multiculturalism. From there it was only a small step for voters to the theses of the far-right and the gap was closed rapidly, they were no longer seen as outsiders on the fringes. In the next two chapters I continue on the path I embarked on and flesh my mainstreaming hypothesis out. While the following chapter uses the construction of immigrant crime as a further example of how far-right claims are given legitimacy, the

last chapter deals in detail with world-making activities in a concrete media genre, namely political talk shows.

5. "We do not distort the reality but point out acts that take place" – The Construction and Representation of Crime Statistics and Immigrant Crime in Germany

> [J]ust as there are infinite ways of describing an object in words or paint, so there are infinite ways of describing with numbers. Think of numbers as a form of poetry.
>
> Numbers can create the illusion that a very complex and ambiguous phenomenon is simple, countable, and precisely defined (Stone 2012, 183; 196).

5.1 Introduction

The spring of 2017 marked a further turn in the trajectory of the far-right *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD). Around half a year before the party managed as the first far-right party in German post-war history to gain representation in the national parliament – and as the largest opposition party at that – Alexander Gauland was voted together with Alice Weidel as AfD's election frontrunner on a party summit in Cologne, on April 23rd. They managed to win the second power struggle within the first four years of the party's existence; each power struggle resulted in a further shift to the right. They won out against the somewhat more moderate (even though still radical) Frauke Petry, who disassociated from the party one day later. Petry herself was responsible for the ousting of Bernd Lucke in 2015, who had co-founded the party in 2013 and also left following its radicalisation with the turn to Petry. While the comparative political science literature unequivocally recommends political parties wanting to increase their vote-share and acceptance to moderate after extremist beginnings (Golder 2016, 490), the AfD has taken the opposite direction and radicalised in ever extreme ways to increasing success. We would expect this to hold especially in a post-fascist country

where, until a few years ago, there were heavy social sanctions present around far-right extremist claims and support (Art 2006, 2011).

As we have seen in the previous chapter, one of two main claims around which the AfD unites their voters is the supposed incommensurability between different cultures - which is channelized in the *Leitkultur* ("leading culture") debate and strong affective investments therein.[97] The other is a novel and threatening wave of violence that arrived with the immigrants, especially since the "summer of migration" in 2015. Indeed, 62 percent of their voters claim that they are concerned about an ongoing increase in crime – even though the crime-rate is falling historically in recent times (Nobis 2018, N.pag.). Only 38 percent of the voters of other parties are concerned about crime (Hilmer et al. 2017, 33). When it comes to refugee crime in particular, a majority of Germans believe that the media is silent about the true crime rate of refugees and reports overly sympathetic on them (Wendekamm and Frommer 2019, 171).

Two days after the selection of Gauland and Weidel as main running-mates for the 2017 federal election, Minister of the Interior Thomas de Maizière (Christian Democrats, CDU) presented the yearly crime statistics of 2016. While he was concerned about some developments, there was reason to be optimistic. The crime rate had slightly fallen, even though the population had risen due to heightened levels of immigration. However, in a press statement titled "*Internal Safety Eroding – Stop the Glossing Over and Sugar Coating*",[98] Gauland commented on the release of the 2016 crime statistics in the following way: '*Due to the mass immigration which the "old*

[97] See Chapter 4 for an analysis of the *Leitkultur* debate.
[98] In this thesis, whenever a quote is written entirely in italics, this indicates a translation from German to English by myself. If I want to highlight a part of a quote, this will be done in bold to avoid confusion.

parties"[99] *are responsible for, there is a glaring erosion of internal safety in Germany. In some places, the monopoly on violence by the state is basically non-existent*' (AfD 2017a). Later on in the year, Weidel claimed that '*mass immigration is an enormous safety problem especially for the most defenceless members of society, namely young girls and women*' (AfD 2017b). According to Gauland, all those who are '*going with open eyes through our country*' (AfD 2017a) could see these worrying developments, underlining the interpellative character of these statements.

How could it be that so many voters of the AfD seem worried about crime trends when there are – generally speaking – many reasons to be optimistic? The problem with crime trends, and especially of more extreme crimes like violent or sexual assault, is that they are very difficult for the individual to gauge from their own experience or those around them in their immediate social worlds. It follows that talking about crime matters because the fear of crime is influenced less by an objectively arrived at inference of the likelihood and existence of *real threats* but is rather based on *subjective feelings* of social problems. Therefore, any information about the development of crime will inherently be a represented one – we don't have unmediated access to it. It is plausible to assume that whenever fear of crime within a population falls, this is due to other problem areas gaining more prevalence (Windzio et al. 2007, 10) or vice versa, that the frequent reference to statistical data on the problem of "mugging", like in the UK in the 1970s, can lead to a moral panic around street crime (Hall et al. 2013). In that vein, crime statistics strongly show the power of numbers and the categories they are built on cannot be considered as innocent. Dvora Yanow rightfully points out that in

[99] The German equivalent to „mainstream parties" is the pejorative "*Altparteien*", which, while resembling Nazi rhetoric, was not actually used by the Nazis in the same way as it is now.

> scientific and state administrative endeavours (…) counting has a similar power to naming (…) Knowing there are "ten million alcoholics in the United States" (…) conveys a certain factual standing, and the magnitude of that number is enough to compel serious public attention and shape public policy in respect of treatments or "cures" or other actions (Yanow 2003, 10, with a quote by Gusfield).

Moral panics are constructed successfully especially with regards to the more extreme crimes such as murder or assault, which are in turn those that politicians and media contributions most often talk about.[100] Due to the rarer character of these shocking crimes, individuals necessarily rely on information from public channels.[101] This would be different if a petty crime such as pick-pocketing would be on the rise in a specific area, where either you or your social contacts experience a definite change in the pick-pocketing rate. The necessarily constructed nature of the problem comes to the fore when we take into account that unlike the fluctuations of goods of everyday life such as milk or gasoline, fluctuations of the crime rate occur out of the publics' grasp (Windzio and Kleimann 2009, 94). It comes as no surprise, then, that in Germany, just as in many other European countries, the far-right agitates heavily against a supposedly unsafe society, in which norm breakers do not care about commonly shared values, attack the social body, and that the situation was made worse by the recent influx of immigrants.

The argument in the chapter takes the following form: I start with a discussion of the official crime reports by the Federal Crime Agency (*Bundeskriminalamt*, BKA), both specialised reports on immigrant crime and the yearly overall crime statistics. While these look like "un-ideological" and "objective" reports done by the bureaucracy, we can either find, on a sympathetic reading, unintentionally misleading- or, on a more critical reading, straight-up distorting presentations of crime statistics. Then, I

[100] Whenever I talk about media coverage and the media consumption of private users in this chapter, I refer to media programmes about real crime and not fictional representations of crime.
[101] Sexual murders, for example, are mentioned in the media 6.450 times more often than their proportion within the sub-section of violent crimes would suggest (Hestermann 2014, 270).

investigate how the media reports about those statistics and crime in general. I highlight the fact that just prior to the electoral ascent of the AfD, media reports on the criminal immigrant reach their numerical climax and that public TV news shows have actually overtaken private ones in quantitative reporting on criminal immigrants. Finally, I look at how the far-right presents the problem and argue that their constructions of reality could only take hold in the population due to the work previously done by established politicians and the media. The horizon[102] on which the far-right formulates their claims about the purported danger of violent immigrants has changed so strongly that constructions about the danger of immigrant crime for the social body do no longer seem outrageous and paranoid, but are taken as a *real* problems – the association of "crime" and "migrant" became commonsensical for many people, including TV presenters, as we shall see. Therefore, this chapter is less about the repeatedly asked question if immigrants are more criminal than Germans, but rather what actors do with crime statistics and how criminality is represented as a problem - and a specific kind of criminality at that.

5.2 The Representation of Immigrant Crime in Government Statistics

My interest into the production and discussion of crime reports was sparked by an online article, published on the internet presence of the main TV news-show, *tagesschau* (2019). Their fact checkers were surprised by some of the statistics found

[102] To remind ourselves, the discourse-theoretical concept of the horizon can be understood as that space in which the demands and articulations put forward by the far-right are understood (or not) and compete with the demands of other political projects. They were not seen as a proper interpretation of social reality, what was wrong in society, and how we can overcome societies' challenges. In Aletta Norval's words, '[h]orizons make possible and limit what may appear as relevant subjects and objects of politics' (Norval 2012, 810). For a longer elaboration on the concept, see Chapter 3.

in the 2018 report by the BKA on “Criminality in the Context of Migration”[103] and the subsequent tendentious media coverage on the supposedly disproportional high number of crimes committed by immigrants. A couple of points caught the eyes of the fact checkers. First, the number that was shared often in traditional and social media was that immigrants committed more than twice as many crimes within the category “*murder, manslaughter, assisted murder*” than in the year before, 230 instead of 112.[104] But on closer inspection it turned out that the high number of murders was reached through the inclusion of the victims of the terror attack on a Christmas market in Berlin in December 2016. However, actually twelve people were killed during the attack (out of them 7 Germans, who make it into the statistics), while 75 were injured. This number is important, because the fact checkers found out that due to the way the criminal entry into the police register works, those 75 injured people were, for statistical purposes, also killed. The register couldn’t distinguish between the grades of injury once a crime with at least one successful murder was committed. The BKA mentions this briefly in the report (BKA 2019a, 52), but from elite and media representations this crucial

[103] The yearly report on ”Criminality in the Context of Migration” was inaugurated in 2015, after conservative politicians and the far-right had argued for the need to understand the nexus between criminality and migration for some time. It is noteworthy, that civil society campaigners have called for a specialised statistic that sheds light on violence *against* immigrants at least since the pogroms against asylum seekers in the 1990s. It is explicitly stated in the introduction of each report that its purpose is to shed light on the effects of the 2015 so-called “refugee wave” on criminality in Germany. It is noteworthy that the report puts ”refugee wave” into quotation marks and names it the ”so-called” ”refugee wave”, but this framing of the report nevertheless follows the commonsensical association of a rise in refugees equals a rise in crime (and therefore there is a need for a specialised report to understand the phenomenon better) that is prevalent in society. In Deborah Stone’s (2012, 188; 192) words, ‘[l]ike metaphors, numbers make normative leaps. Measures imply a need for action, because we don’t measure things except when we want to change them or change our behaviour in response to them’; ‘[t]he initial demands to count something formally (…) grow from a belief that the phenomenon is widespread but underground; the cases that occasionally surface are not isolated rarities’.

[104] For example, the AfD shared on their Facebook page an article full of misleading claims out of the “official” statistics, such as the 230 murdered Germans, calling that rise ‘frightening’. That post by AfD was shared over 5.000 times (correctiv 2019).

information is either withheld or mentioned deep down in an article following a misleading headline.[105]

However, what the fact-checkers didn't catch was that also the number of 230 needs to be contextualised. Namely, I purposefully wrote the awkward sounding term "successful murder" as against common association, in every crime committed in the category "*murder, manslaughter, assisted murder*", a death doesn't need to occur. That is because the BKA highlights that out of the 230 victims only '*102 people fell victim to an accomplished offence* ["Davon wurden 102 Opfer einer vollendeten Tat"]' (BKA 2019a, 52). It follows, we need to subtract the 75 injured-but-dead as well from the 102, resulting in the number of actually killed victims within the category of "*murder, manslaughter, assisted murder*" of 27 instead of 230![106] That the AfD is not offering this contextualisation is clear, with AfD MEP Martin Hess saying in a speech in the *Bundestag*: '*last year 102 Germans fell victim to an accomplished homicide* ["Tötungsdelikt"] b*y immigrants'*.[107] In short, either on purpose or through missing contextualisation's do official crime statistics by get communicated in the public sphere that mislead what actually goes on in reality. Instead of what one would assume when being presented with a sentence along the line of "230 Germans fell victim to a crime that falls within the category "*murder, manslaughter, assisted murder*", only 102 Germans were actually killed in 2018 – yet this number is also wrong as the 75 injured

[105] See for example the headline of the following article, reading: "Violence by foreigners against Germans on the rise". In the third sentence the crucial number of 230 German victims in the category "*murder, manslaughter, assisted murder*" is highlighted to talk about the increased threat for Germans and only way later in the article the number 230 is contextualised with the 75 dead-but-not-dead individuals (see die Welt 2019).

[106] From the 2018 report onwards, the BKA has changed its wording when it comes to the number of victims in the category and the result of the attack. In the report for crimes committed in 2017, the BKA says that from 112 victims, '*13 victims were killed*' (BKA 2018, 54). But this information is communicated in in the following years, for example for 2019, by saying that from 138 victims in the category, *'27 people fell victim to an accomplished offence*' (BKA 2020, 52). I provided this information via a comparison of 2017 and 2019 to exclude the anomaly of 2018.

[107] Quoted from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IzWgGpf4rOQ, 02:12-02:19, accessed 12/09/2022.

people from the terror attack in Berlin were also included in that number and therefore the "real" number of Germans who lost their lives due to acts of immigrants is 27. I haven't found one single instance of this line of argument being correctly and transparently made in elite representations.

Second, when the statistical report was inaugurated in 2015, the authorities defined the term "immigrant" (*Zuwanderer*) rather restrictively, so that migrants originating from the EU, recognized refugees, and guest workers were excluded from entering the sample. Included at the time were only immigrants with precarious or no residency permit (BKA 2015, 1). This is noteworthy because this narrow definition differs from our everyday usage of the word "immigrant" and therefore the results of the earlier reports could be interpreted as being valid for everyone who would fit the wider understanding (tagesschau 2019). Crucially, this particular definition of immigrant is very restrictive and biased against a heightened crime rate, which is not at all representative for the commonsensical association of "immigrant" as everyone who is not born in Germany or is a descendant of a German family. Therefore, '[f]rom a criminological perspective, the central problem in evaluating crimes committed by "foreigners" is that the category of "foreigners" is criminologically worthless because it cannot be defined distinctively' (Feltes, List, and Bertamini 2018, 600).

But, adding to the confusion, from the 2017 report onwards, the definition of "immigrant" was altered and from now on did include those with a confirmed refugee status (BKA 2018, 3). Through that, the category of whose crimes were counted rose by around 1,15 million. It is out of the question that with such a rise in numbers, a rise in crimes follows. While the BKA mentioned this in their report, they nevertheless added figures comparing the two years of 2016 and 2017, for example for the rise of sexual assaults. Of course, right-leaning media or political actors shared those figures

widely - without a notice that the sample size rose immensely from one year to the next.

Further complicating the issue is that in the wake of the Cologne New Year's scandal, a new criminal offence was introduced, namely sexual harassment ("*Sexuelle Belästigung*"). This new offence has a lower threshold to be committed; instead of assault only harassment has to be proven by the authorities. Even though every attempt to criminalise attacks on bodily autonomy are to be applauded, this is another reason why the numbers went up in a year to year comparison.

While we can maybe look beyond the framing of the report or the non-dead but dead-for-the-statistics part, one point in particular shows the intended or unintended mainstreaming of (radical) right-wing viewpoints and problem diagnoses. This also relates to the previous chapter and the affective investments into the dangers foreign others purportedly pose for a pure German nation. Namely, in the introduction to the report, the BKA highlights the impossibility of comparing their own statistics from 2016 with those from 2017, especially in the category of sexual crimes due to the wider understanding of the group of "immigrants" and the new crime of sexual harassment. They even state explicitly that only general trends can be deduced but calculating a concrete rate of change is doomed to fail (BKA 2018, 4).

However, once the report turns to the subsection of sexual crimes the BKA does just that. What is more, in the last sentence before comparing the past years in a figure, the BKA again mentions the new crime of sexual harassment and that if one adjusts the numbers to not include those crimes which didn't exist in the 2016 report, the number of sexual crimes perpetrated amounts instead of 5.258 only to 3.597. But in the figure, they include the sexual harassment numbers again, *after cautioning against doing that and warning that one cannot make comparisons with previous years*.

Instead, they calculate in a reader-friendly way the rise in percent from 2016 to 2017 (BKA 2018, 24). In sum, instead of a year by year rise of sexual crimes from 3.404 to 5.258 (which would amount to a rise of 54 percent), the actual number would only be 3.597, or 5.7 percent. And that already includes the way larger sample due to the different counting of immigrants technique.

So far one *might* still argue that the inconsistencies discussed are due to the bureaucratic workings of the police force and their reporting techniques and technical infrastructure (though these can still produce injustices that shouldn't be excused). The people who put these statistics together probably never received a course in framing theory and what happens with those statistics after their publication is out of their control. Where it gets interesting, then, is when established politicians talk about those crime statistics. Here we don't find straight up misleading reporting of numbers, but that the way those numbers are talked about strongly lack context and the purported danger for society is being blown out of proportion; again mainstreaming far-right sentiment. Two examples show this.

First, the same "oversight" concerning rising sexual crimes by immigrants was then committed by elite politicians as well and entered thus the public realm, disseminated by the media. At an especially crucial timing, around two weeks before the general election in 2017, the Interior Minister for Bavaria Herrmann (CSU), presented the Bavarian crime statistics, with the take-away message that sexual violence was up over 50 percent from the previous year. He had also added the novel crime to the statistics and one week later had to correct his own numbers. When the party was confronted with the question why they released the statistics two weeks before the general election, the increasingly rightwards-drifting party chief Seehofer said in a far-right sentiment that '*there are things in life where the circumstances should*

not matter', meaning that the situation was so dire that an intervention was needed. In reality the number of sexual assaults had risen only 5 percent, instead of 50 percent (Süddeutsche Zeitung 2017).

Second, and as mentioned before, in the spring of 2017, the election year in which the AfD became the first far-right party to enter the German parliament, Minister of the Interior Thomas de Maizière (CDU) presented in a press conference the yearly overall crime report *(Polizeiliche Kriminalstatistik*, PKS, see BMI 2017). There was reason to celebrate, because the overall crime rate had slightly fallen from the previous year, even though the population rose. However, there was one thing that de Maizière was not happy with:

> *It is unpleasant that crimes committed by immigrants (…) have risen disproportionately last year, there is no way to gloss over that (…) [and] unfortunately, also the large increase in the area of violent crime is especially due to crimes committed by immigrants. For violent crimes we have 1 percent more Germans but about 90 percent more migrant suspects in the year 2016*.[108]

These numbers are not incorrect, however the BKA itself - of whom de Maizière is, by virtue of his office, the boss - warns in the introduction of the specialised report "Criminality in the Context of Migration" of the same year that the PKS cannot "*make robust statements about the crime rate of immigrants**, especially not in relation to the crime rate of Germans***" (BKA 2017, 2, my emphasis). Criminological studies also agree that 'the PKS does not allow for a comparative analysis of the crime rates of Germans and non-Germans' (Feltes, List, and Bertamini 2018, 603). This is because the "baseline" of the group of "immigrants" is not known and changes from year to year. Of course, especially in the years of 2015 and 2016 the group of "immigrants" saw a large increase. As a matter of fact, the BKA is aware of the sensitivity that is needed

[108] Quoted from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbkFzId7g3g, 10:42-11:25, accessed 12/09/2022.

when presenting official crimes statistics relating to immigrants. In one of their "victimisation surveys", the BKA correctly points out the need for accurate reporting and how disinformation is crucial to avoid in sensitive topics where public opinion can be easily manipulated through a "felt" change in dangers and threats (BKA 2019b, III). Therefore, '[t]he data on the criminality of foreigners are mostly interpreted incorrectly – either unknowingly or on purpose' (Feltes, List, and Bertamini 2018, 601). Through that misrepresentation, the frame of the racialised criminal immigrant can become dominant and thereby create 'set paths [that] operate as cul-de-sacs because after people filter issues through them, they explain racial phenomena following a predictable route' (Bonilla-Silva 2018, 54). As I have been hinting at, this can get exacerbated by a biased media coverage, to which I turn now.

5.3 The Coverage of Crime Statistics and Immigrant Crime in the Media

The weekly broadsheet newspaper *Die Zeit* summarises six main takeaways of the presentation of the 2016 PKS. The first point, in bold, reads: '*Violent crime rising again. And that is primarily due to acts by foreigners*' (die Zeit 2017). However, by definition, the PKS only enters subjects as charged with having perpetrated a crime. In no way does the PKS refer to actual convictions or crimes that are proved to have been perpetrated by concrete individuals. This is because the PKS is compiled after the work of the police on a case has been done and after the case is handed to the judiciary; there is no more feedback flowing back.[109] Crucially, the article is aware of that fact, besides the misleading headline. In one particular sentence it is claimed that in the state of Thuringia, violent crime committed by immigrants tripled in 2016. However, in

[109] Interior Minister de Maizière is guilty of the same in the quote above, once saying 'due to crimes committed by immigrants' and then, more correctly, 'immigrant suspects'.

the sentence before and after they refer more correctly to the number of immigrant *suspects*, who are accused of having committed crimes; without us knowing if that accusation was indeed appropriate. This thread goes all through the media coverage of the presentation of the crime statistics. For example, the weekly quality-magazine *Focus* reports on them in the same way, their headline reads: "*Report: Number of violent crimes committed by immigrants risen*" (Focus n.d.).

Additionally, rarely is the high number of non-German suspects contextualised and the information is presented as if Germany as a whole suddenly became a more dangerous place. A more truthful reporting would include that according to the vocal researcher and former head of the "Criminological Research Institute of Niedersachsen", Christian Pfeiffer, immigrants are twice as likely to have charges pressed against them as Germans. As he puts it, '*if Moritz attacks Max, charges are pressed in 13 percent of the cases and those enter the statistics. But if Mehmet attacks Max, this rises to 27 percent'*.[110] In short, while it is true that the number of non-German suspects rose, their higher number can in part be explained by a higher likelihood of being charged *and* risen immigration numbers, while in media reports and especially their headlines, the crucial information that we are dealing with suspects and not convictions is often omitted.

What is further omitted in many media reports are the targets of crime, even though de Maizière mentioned in said press conference. Namely, 80 percent of the victims of crimes committed by immigrants are immigrants themselves.[111] We can zoom into this number even more to get to the basis of the violence. A large part of it can be traced to the inhuman cramping of possibly traumatised asylum seekers into

[110] Quoted from *Menschen bei Maischberger*, 29.11.17, „Die Messerattacke von Altena: Verroht unsere Gesellschaft?", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXPNsI00xx8, 01:03:41 – 01:03:52, accessed 12/09/2022.
[111] Quoted from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbkFzId7g3g, 11:29, accessed 12/09/2022.

small camps, who hold different religious identities that may have clashed in their home societies (de Maizière also mentions this). Numbers are not easy to come by and in detail only published by some states, but in the state Baden Württemberg two thirds of assaults by refugees were committed within refugee accommodations (taz 2017). But the crucial fact is that in media reports and when politicians talk about immigrant crime, a fantasmatic situation is created where for the whole of Germany the likelihood to fall victim to crime has massively increased. Elite actors appeal to the horrific dimension of fantasy when they warn about a dangerous, slippery road to a state of lawlessness, due to those who supposedly do not respect the laws and customs. Even though this completely misses the reality that immigrant crime is to a large degree committed against immigrants with Germans having much less to fear than is usually invoked.

Another shortcoming of the PKS is that it not only cannot account for the conviction or not of a suspect, but they also cannot account for the degree of the crime if there is a conviction. The literature shows that generally the police file reports under higher charges that are subsequently lowered by the courts, and especially so in cases of sexual assault and murder (Kunz and Singelnstein 2016, 204–5). Of course, these are the cases that the far-right and concerned politicians mobilise most often against and cite from the PKS as evidence for an increased likelihood to fall victim to the most violent crimes. In a similar vein, when the work of the police has finished, the case is “closed” on their end and enters the statistics, only in around 30 percent of the cases actual court proceedings follow (Feltes, List, and Bertamini 2018, 602). This further muddles the grounds on which crime is being portrayed as on the rise – it seems very difficult to say what the *actual* crime rate really looks like.

We can find further evidence of how the manipulation of crime statistics can enter the consciousness of the population through media coverage. In the example

below, it is crucial how one official statistic, which appears objective and beyond ideological influence due to being published by the federal crime agency, is used in a panic-creating manner and not being immediately corrected before widely shared.

5.3.1 Vignette I – "One does not dare to leave the house after dark"

During a Town Hall event in the run-up to the federal elections of 2017, broadcasted in primetime on ZDF (one of the two major public TV channels), the Social Democratic chancellor candidate Martin Schulz was confronted by a woman who argued that: '*The BKA has published in April a report ["Criminality in the Context of Migration"], according to which in the past four years, sexual assaults perpetrated by refugees have risen 500 percent (…) Many parents are afraid for their daughters*, ***one does not dare anymore to leave the house when it's dark***' and asked him, how he wants to protect women from these assaults. Intuitively, Schulz questioned the basis of this statistic, upon which she gave him a single printed out page from the internet, visibly no page of the original report (the audience laughs upon this). Pressed for time and given that Schultz couldn't read the document for the next couple of minutes, the moderator intervenes and said that the fact-checking service could look this up and that viewers should refer to it tomorrow. Before leaving it at that, Schulz quickly interjects: '*Because you asked, whoever comes into this country, looking for protection and breaks laws under the cloak of this protection, has to get out of this country, has to leave*'.[112] Neither Schulz nor the moderator challenged her on the point that in Germany citizens "cannot leave the house after dark". 3.44 million people watched the Town Hall on TV (Quotenmeter

[112] Quoted from https://www.zdf.de/politik/wahlen/klartext-schulz-100.html, 01:09:30-01:11:50, accessed 23.01.2021.

2017) and it is questionable how many of them went back online the next day to see the results of the fact check.[113]

What these remarks amount to is that seemingly objective and un-ideological statistics can either be presented or reported about in a particular way that helps to spin the far-right narrative. The result of this is the commonsensical association, ascribed on the horizon, that there is a problem that one needs to be brave enough to talk about regarding immigrants or refugees. This cannot become any clearer than when an employee of the state-run television companies agrees with the general sentiment presented by the far-right. Yet, this is precisely what happened with the moderator Sandra Maischberger in the talk show "humans at Maischberger" (*Menschen bei Maischberger*), broadcast on the other major public TV channel, ARD.

5.3.2 Vignette II – "Now don't tell me we don't have a problem here"

In the show of November 29th, 2017, a group of politicians including AfD's Weidel and an academic, the aforementioned criminologist Pfeiffer, were supposed to discuss the violent attack by far-right activists on the life of a local mayor who in the past had talked about and dealt with refugees in a benign way. The mayor is one of the discussants himself - visibly still injured – but to a large extent the show revolved around the "problems" following the migration movements of 2015 into Germany (Goeßmann 2019, 429–30). During the discussion, Pfeiffer highlights some issues discussed above, such as the differing charging of crime realities of Moritz and Mehmet or that young men are more violent than other parts of the population and that immigrants

[113] I was unable to locate the fact-check, but Goeßmann (2019, 428) points out, without sourcing the fact-check, that it indeed took place and that the statement was judged as untenable. Through him I was made aware of the example.

often are young men. He claims that inclusion and education can limit their likelihood of committing acts of violence, as seen with the integration of young Turks, for example. But towards the end of the show and after another set of clarificatory and situating remarks, Maischberger interjects and cogently presents the one thing she is also, like so many other media commentators, guilty of:

> ***One thing is the perception of facts and another the reality of facts***. (…) *And here I am joining Miss Weidel now. There is a group of adolescent immigrants, the young men who are alone here. But you cannot dismiss that this is a group from which violence happens and significantly more so*. ***I understand what you say*** **with "he is getting charged there",** ***but that is very nit-picky*****. (…)** ***Now don't tell me, that we don't have a problem here***.[114]

Here we have an excellent example of this underlying feeling that there must be something wrong with immigrants and their criminality, a conviction so strong that one feels it deep down in the heart and cannot explain it away through "nit-picky" arguments. Migrants simply must be stealing the "enjoyment"[115] of Germans, their safety. It couldn't be otherwise, no talking the problem away. There is an affective-emotional clinging-on to convictions even in the light of facts, not only on behalf of the far-right, but also from publicly funded TV moderators, who have a duty to inform impartially and educate the public.[116]

How could it be that the moderator of a talk show in public television is so certain that there must be something wrong with immigrants and violence that she has to jump

---

[114] Quoted from: *Menschen bei Maischberger*, 29.11.17, „Die Messerattacke von Altena: Verroht unsere Gesellschaft?", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXPNsI00xx8, 01:06:46 – 01:07:41, accessed 12/09/2022.

[115] For a detailed discussion of the psychoanalytic concept "theft of enjoyment", please refer to the theory chapter as well as its application in the previous chapter.

[116] There are also similar examples to be found internationally. In 1993, the back-then Shadow Home Secretary Tony Blair argued in an opinion piece for *The Sun* that '[w]e can debate the crime rate statistics until the cows come home. The Home Office says crime is falling. Others say it isn't. I say crime, like economic recovery, is something that politicians can't persuade people about one way or another. People know it because they experience it. They don't need to be told. And they know crime is rising" (Blair, quoted in Green 2006, 137). This goes to show how important it is to understand why these tropes are used when, by whom, and for what purpose.

in for the far-right? That this conviction is shared so strongly might also be due to changed media coverage concerning crimes committed by immigrants. If it could be shown that violent acts committed by immigrants make the national news disproportionately more often than violent Germans, we would have a strong indicator for that taken-for-granted connection.

5.3.3 Immigrant Crime in the Media: Public and Private, Broadsheet and Tabloid

It is a common-place within media studies that the tabloid press and private TV stations cover criminal activities more often than the quality press and public TV stations. When comparing the two strands of television, private channels in Germany spend about twice as much airtime on crime than public ones (Windzio and Kleimann 2009, 103). Not only the quantity of coverage differs, but also the quality. Sensationalism, dramatization, and taking isolated incidents as indicators for broader trends are all widespread. This results in strongly distorted views on the development of the crime rate. Just how strong is the misapprehension of the crime rate and how might media consumption influence crime perception?

When presented with the overall crime rate from 1995 and some selected particular crimes, a representative sample was asked in 2005 to estimate how the crime rate had developed and they greatly overjudged the prevalence of crime. While the number of total crimes had fallen 4 percent over the decade, 56 percent of respondents thought there was a “very large” or “large increase” and 29 percent felt a “slight increase”. Crucially, especially regarding those crimes that are talked about frequently in the media, like burglary[117] and murder, the public was way off. While

[117] Burglary is another recent darling topic of media portrayals of crime. It also has a racist dimension, as the news coverage is dominated by “marauding Balkan-gangs”. Nobis (2018) reports how every

domestic burglary had fallen 48 percent, only 0.7 percent of respondents correctly estimated a “large” or “very large decrease”. Similarly, the murder rate was down 36 percent and only 0.9 percent of the sample guessed a “large” or “very large decrease” (Windzio and Kleimann 2009, 96).

But what is interesting for us is that the biggest discrepancy from estimated crime rate to real crime rate occurred in consumers of private TV channel news programmes, even after controlling for education or region (Windzio et al. 2007, 57;63; Pfeiffer, Windzio, and Kleimann 2005). Viewers of public TV channel news were not immune from the overestimation, but were off less dramatically. If we apply these insights to the development of reporting practices of broadsheet media to be discussed in a moment, there are strong indications that with broadsheets coming ever closer to reporting practices of tabloids that fear of crime and a distorted apprehension of crime rate developments also occurs for public channel consumers (Nobis 2018). This could lead to a legitimization of far-right viewpoints and demands. Hence, the hypothesis is that if we have a good reason to believe that a disproportionate coverage of crime leads to an overestimation of the “problem” of crime, the same can hold true for the “fear” of “foreigner crime”, a fear that the far-right in Germany, as in other places, is playing on substantively.

Thomas Hestermann did some illuminating work on this topic through his comparative analyses of TV and newspaper coverage of violent crime in the years

---

major media outlet – broadsheet or tabloid – ran an article with the exact or similar headline of “*One break-in every three minutes in Germany*”, not mentioning that only 0.18 percent of the population will fall victim to a burglary in their lifetime. In an episode of the talk show “Maischberger” titled “*More break-ins, more criminality – Can the State still protect us?*”, aired on ZDF on April 6th, 2016, the moderator begins the show by saying ‘*Everyone knows someone who got burgled, you certainly as well, maybe you had to experience it as well*’. This further shows the increasing tabloidisation of the mainstream media and the dramatization of media crime coverage in general. The tabloidisation of public TV stations will be examined more closely in the following chapter via the example of political talk shows. For the quote, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1TE4nUK4Ak&t=9s, 00:00-00:07, accessed 12/09/2022.

2014, 2017, and 2019. His findings are especially enlightening given that after the scandalous New Year's events in Cologne there was a general suspicion among large parts of the public and even mainstream politicians that the media intentionally ignored violent crimes committed by immigrants and overall paint a too rosy picture of immigrants and their behaviour in German society.

However, much to the contrary, Hestermann (2018) finds that the media very disproportionately reports on crimes committed by immigrants and this holds - with more and less worrisome numbers - for TV stations and newspapers, public and private ownership, tabloid and broadsheet press, left leaning or right leaning. What interests us most with regards to the mainstreaming of the worldviews of the far-right are the yearly comparisons Hestermann provides. Whereas for 2014, when the AfD was still largely considered a "professor's party" occupied with leaving the Eurozone and the various tropes around the dangers of heterogeneity for German society had not fully taken off yet, the descent of criminal suspects was rarely mentioned in TV coverage of the largest broadcasters. Only in 4.8 percent of reports on violent crimes was the descent of the suspect specifically mentioned; in 0.9 percent as explicitly German and in 3.9 percent as explicitly non-German – a ratio of about 4:1 (Hestermann 2019, 5).

Yet, reports where information about origin is explicitly given more than triples in the media coverage two years later, to 17.9 percent in 2017. But, crucially, while a German suspect is still mentioned with a similar likelihood, in 1.5 percent of cases, for non-Germans this number explodes to 16,4 percent - for every reported violent crime committed by Germans, ten violent crimes by non-Germans are reported on. Additionally, and as Hestermann rightly points out, if one takes the PKS for that year into account where the ratio of German and non-German suspects is around 2.3:1, it

follows that the nationality of a non-German suspect is revealed 25 times more often than their statistical distribution would warrant (Hestermann 2019, 5). And this, still, does not take into account that Mehmet is double as likely as Moritz to enter the statistics, meaning the discrepancy between reporting and proportion of real crimes committed is even larger.

With such an overrepresentation of foreigner crime, it is no wonder that a talk show host tells the criminologist “Now don’t tell me that we don’t have a problem here” and that large parts of the population indicate in opinion surveys that they don’t feel secure in Germany and worry about a safe future. After all, this points to the fact that this might be less due to a supposedly over-complicated modernity in which individuals search for their place in society, but due to a media coverage that prioritises click-baiting and sensationalisation over proportionate and contextualising reporting. This is one of the reasons why the wave of AfD’s “we can’t live in our own country anymore, one is afraid to go out after dark” pushed them - aided by the media without particularly intending it - to their path- and norm-breaking 12.6 percent vote-share in the general election of 2017. Such a focus on the supposedly negative characteristics of immigrants in German media is nothing new – but the degree is. Already in 2005, Daniel Müller (2005, 112) summed up in his research on the representation of ethnic minorities in German media that when immigrants are talked about, this occurs in a negative vein, through a focus on criminality or as a money strain; in any event, as a burden for society. Further, we can find a corollary inverse trend, where the number of reports on explicitly non-German victims of violence fell by half from 2014 to 2017, or from 4.8 percent of all crime reports on TV to 2.4 percent, even though suspected violence against non-Germans (as reported in the crime statistics with all its caveats) was on the rise (Hestermann 2018, 132).

Additionally, we need to keep in mind that these heavily skewed representations take place in a climate where the AfD is claiming that foreigner crime is *intentionally played down* by the authorities and the mainstream media. The AfD clearly discerns a misrepresentation of the *actual situation*, but one in which the threat is supposedly downplayed. Hence, the AfD MP and then Chairman of the Law Committee of the *Bundestag*, Stephan Brandner, said that 'even police crime statistics seem to be more of a Merkelian wishful image of the security situation than a reflection of the actual situation in Germany' (quoted from Hestermann and Hoven 2020, 728).

Yet, this is not all. In his most recent study, Hestermann (2019, 5) detects that the same trend continued further. For 2019, he finds that 31 percent of TV reports on violent crime mention the nationality of the suspects – this time in 3.4 percent of cases German and 28 percent non-German. Here the ratio falls a bit below the previous 10:1, but the reports occur more often, which therefore makes the "problem" appear more prevalent and enters the consciousness of viewers more regularly. While the reality is obviously way more complicated than to attribute far-right success to this development alone, it is at least worth mentioning that the rise of the far-right continued during state-wide elections in that year, where they would score their all-time best with 23.5 percent in Brandenburg and 27.5 percent in Saxony.[118]

So far, we have seen that media coverage on violent crime very disproportionately names an explicitly foreign "threat", whereas crimes committed by Germans are covered in a disinterested way in which nationality and origin do not play a role and the media is more likely to "excuse" crimes by Germans (Müller 2005, 100). But Hestermann was also curious about the proportion of how many reports on the

[118] While, admittedly, far-right parties often have more success in eastern states likes Brandenburg and Saxony, their results in the previous elections in these regions in 2014 were only 12.2 and 9.7 percent, respectively.

topic of immigrants' life in Germany as a whole deal with the "criminal immigrant". His results further indicate that that a change in reporting practices have played a large role for the AfD entering the national parliament in 2017. While we would expect for private TV stations that the "criminal immigrant" makes up a larger portion of all news reporting on immigrants, in 2017 the public TV stations actually beat out private ones. The former reported on "criminal immigrants" in a staggering 55.9 percent of all news segments in which immigrants played a part, while for private TV stations the number was 48.9 percent (Hestermann 2019, 11).

Newspapers seem to be in a better position to cover more widely and with different stories on immigrant life in Germany, as the proportion here in the major newspapers is only 22 percent. As can be expected, the tabloid *BILD* as the most read newspaper in Germany, takes the lead with the most homogeneous coverage. Whenever they report about immigrants, violence is also involved in 41 percent of the cases (Hestermann 2019, 10). This contrasts with the previously mentioned claim by AfD that the media supposedly is silent on the "negative aspects" of the heightened levels of immigration. But the four other newspapers considered, all broadsheets, also make the connection of immigrants and violence in between 13 percent of reports in the strongly left-leaning *die tageszeitung* and up to 20.8 percent in the liberal-conservative *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (*Hestermann 2019, 11*)*.

Another example that shows the effects of the changing media coverage and politicians' rhetoric are victimisation surveys. In general, they are mainly concerned with enlightening the "dark field" of crime, by asking respondents if they have fallen victim within a specific period to specific crimes, which the "light field" of reported crimes of the PKS cannot account for. But what is interesting for us is that it also asks about attitudes towards crime. These studies are published by the BKA itself, with the

first survey coming from 2012, the most recent was published in 2019 and analyses data from 2017 (BKA 2019b), while the analysis of the 2020 data is due to be published in 2022.

Interestingly, the respondents in 2017 did not report a *personally* stronger fear to fall victim to crimes themselves compared to 2012. For example, the fear of being assaulted or sexually harassed only went up 1.6 percent each. However, we do find a change when it comes to the *general* fear about those same crimes.[119] While it is the case that for every crime category the personal perception is much lower than the general fear, the difference is the most dramatic for the categories of assault and sexual harassment, those categories which are most talked about in the public statistics and their presentation or in media representations (see Feltes, List, and Bertamini 2018, 605; Hoven 2018, 278). When specifically asked about the likelihood of being assaulted, only 3.4 percent thought it “quite” or “very likely”. However, 18.2 percent stated that they are “quite” or “very” concerned about assaults as a whole. The second highest discrepancy falls under the category of sexual harassment of women, here the difference is 7.2 percent for personal fear and 22.2 percent for general concern (BKA 2019b, 51). Hence, there is a reasonably low fear of falling victim to a crime oneself in the population, but there is a way larger perception of a general, impersonal danger; “that something is not right”.

[119] The same pattern can be found in public opinion surveys when respondents are asked to list their biggest concerns for society and for themselves. The fear of immigration or terrorism is often listed as a high concern for society but not for the individual in their everyday lives, which suggests the constructed and affective nature of the “problem” (see Mondon 2022b).

5.4 The Far-Right and Their "War of Position" on Immigrant Crime

All of this is part of the horizon on top of which the far-right formulates their claims for- and diagnosed ills of society. I argue that their over-emphasis on violent foreigner crime could resonate with the population, become acceptable, only due to an almost continuous rise in elite discourse mainstreaming of the connection between foreigners and violence. Until even well-meaning commentators and politicians intuitively feel there must be something wrong with this nexus. Just how much has the far-right, and especially AfD, pushed this issue? How does their "war of position" on the issue look like?[120]

These days, dooms-day scenarios are regularly constructed by the AfD, similarly to the woman in the talk show, who described that she fears going out of the house at night. For example, the AfD faction of the state parliament in Baden-Wurttemberg claims: "Germans are murdered, knife attacks are increasing explosively, and the people in the country no longer know whether they can still rely on the rule of law" (quoted in Hestermann and Hoven 2020, 727).

This has not always been the case. In the manifesto of the AfD published in the run-up to the federal elections in 2013, shortly after the party was founded, we find no mention of a problem like violent crime and a threat by foreigners. Interestingly, the party has by-now decided to delete the manifesto from its online presence and it is not very easy to source. The four-page document is dominated by EU politics and currency policy and there are only some vague mentions for a refocussing of the German immigration policy. It calls for a renewed focus on highly qualified immigrants, who are

[120] Antonio Gramsci (Gramsci 1971, chap. 2) distinguishes, in metaphoric, military terms, between a "war of position" in which change in cultural ideas and norms takes a long and winding road while in a "war of movement" change occurs after direct clashes between competing forces, with clear victors and losers.

supposed to come to Germany with the help of an immigration model similar to Canada and includes a re-assurance that "seriously" persecuted asylum seekers have a right to come and even work (AfD 2013). However, in 2016 the AfD formulated for the first time a more extensive "policy platform" (*Grundsatzprogramm*) and there the "problem" becomes more prominent. Indeed, the sub-section on "Internal Security and the Judiciary" comes at the third place in the document, right after an avowal of democracy and a section on the EU and the Euro. Foreign Policy, Social Policy, Energy Policy, Education, Immigration, the Economy, Finance, and Infrastructure all follow later in the policy platform. Similarly, Alice Weidel was asked before the federal elections of 2017 to summarise the main points of the AfD's 70-page election manifesto. While the AfD is generally associated as an anti-immigration party, in her view,

> there are three main topics. There is the guarantee of inner security. That is the main priority. We have seen that the criminal statistics has drastically changed for the worse in the last two years. Then tax deductions and easing the tax code to relieve the tax payers and also strengthen Germany as a centre for business and commerce. And then of course as third point a sustainable, responsible migration and refugee policy. Those are my three priorities and the priorities of AfD (Deutschlandfunk 2017).

The AfD nowadays, after its more moderate liberal-conservative beginnings, discerns a situation in which the inner security of Germany is increasingly subsiding and demands a "*security-political liberation*"[121] to guarantee the protection of the citizens (AfD 2016, 24). This is necessary, because the statistics on the asylum- or migration-background of criminals are for political reasons not neatly kept, hidden away, or sugar-coated and the media is silent on problems brought about by asylum seekers (AfD 2016, 64). According to the manifesto, the majority of members of organised

[121] The original reads „*sicherheitspolitischer Befreiungsschlag*" and "*Befreiungsschlag*" is inherently difficult to translate. It refers to a sudden change to the better out of a vexed situation. If your soccer team is for a long time under pressure but manages to get control of the ball for a second and just shoot it as far away from their own goal as they can – that is a *Befreiungsschlag*. Breaking the foes' military defensive lines to regain access to much needed supplies is also a *Befreiungsschlag*.

crime are foreigners (AfD 2016, 27) and the connection is further severed by coining the term "*immigration-caused criminality*" (*einwanderungsbedingte Kriminalität)* (AfD 2016, 64).[122] They argue for easier deportations for violent immigrants as they are currently done only half-heartedly, or to revoke citizenship when some non-specified crimes are committed (AfD 2016, 26). It seems like they don't want to take citizenship away from Germans, presumably, even though this point is left open.

It follows that the AfD is trying to institute a picture of society under threat. As is the case with the discussion on integration and *Leitkultur*, the need for a change of heart is due and finally someone comes about who is brave enough to talk about the problem, give it the attention it deserves – and not sugar-coat and ignore it for ideological purposes like the *Lügenpresse* (Lying Press) and *Altparteien* (Old Parties).[123] Indeed, the sub-section in the policy platform on criminal immigrants is headlined with the words: "*no camouflaging, no silencing*" (AfD 2016, 64). We can clearly see here the beatific and horrific dimensions of fantasy at work here, when the AfD presents itself as the saviour who is the last hope to save the society from impending doom if the nefarious elements are not stopped.

It might conceivably be argued that not a lot of people actually read these manifestos from beginning to end. What is more important for the construction of

[122] Clearly, the connection between immigration and criminality via the fantasy of numbers is part of a broader trend in Europe and around the world. For example, in his study on the perceptions of social "facts" across 40 countries, Bobby Duffy claims that 'it is very easy to find the same link in just about any country around the world between lurid reporting on crime, deep distrust of any statistical claims that crime is falling and calls for tougher action' (Duffy 2018, 122). This entire nexus has even led to the coining of the neologism "crimmigration", the study of which an entire special issue of the European Journal of Criminology was dedicated to in 2017 (Hestermann 2018, 129). The issue covers different aspects of "crimmigration" either comparatively or via case studies of Spain, Italy, England, Wales, Norway, the Netherland, or Sweden.

[123] Even Donald Trump has offered his opinion on the development of the crime rate in Germany and the alleged cover-up by politicians, when he tweeted on June 19th, 2018 that 'Crime in Germany is up 10% plus (officials do not want to report those crimes) since migrants were accepted'. In fact, overall crime had fallen 9.6 percent from 2016 to 2017 and hit a new 25-year low (Washington Post 2018). Donald Trump is only one amongst a long list of far-right actors who claim the state is supposedly hiding the "real" state of affairs.

political identities are public relation strategies by political parties. This is especially true for the AfD, because in the society as a whole there is still some reluctance in offering the far-right public speaking time in the spotlight, say in local panel discussions, as discussants for public book presentations, or other events in civil society. It follows, that the AfD is mostly reliant on itself and its vast internet presence to get concrete information on its policy stances and the problems they diagnose as needing solutions out to prospective voters.

Press releases, therefore, play an important part for their public relations strategies as they are short and concise, contain definitive statements of their leadership personnel, and can easily be shared on social media.[124] Indeed, the nature of short social media messages also lend themselves incredibly well for "take away messages" regarding crime numbers and real-life complexity is consciously reduced. Social media messages can also be made more credible by invoking official government statistics, which make the claims appear as grounded in "data". With what is known in psychology as the "illusory truth effect", we can then say when a false message is continuously repeated in someone's social circles or social media echo-chamber, that message is accepted as truthful (Duffy 2018, 129–30).

For example, while in 2017 the crime statistics showed the biggest year-to-year reduction since 20 years, Alice Weidel declares in a press release on the statistics that the BKA presents '*shocking numbers*' and uses a few, high-profile murder cases to speak of an '*undamped' 'bloody development*' and a '*climate of violence*'. As is commonplace for the AfD, she then proclaims that '*the time of appeasement, trivialization, or cover-ups of those appalling bloody deeds has to come to an end*' (AfD Bundestag 2018).

[124] E.g., the below quoted press release was posted by Weidel on her Facebook page and from there shared over 2.100 times. A screenshot of the post can be shared upon request.

The constructions of violent threats and the danger of foreigners in AfD press releases was also of interest to Hestermann, this time with Elisa Hoven. Their content analysis of 242 press releases from all forms of organisation of the AfD, from the federal party down to factions in state parliaments, shows that in 95 percent of press releases on violence a foreign suspect is specifically identified, while in only 5 percent of the time a German suspect is mentioned. What is more, whenever Germans are indeed alluded to, often this is meant to highlight how little they contribute to overall crime or when the acts by an Iraqi with German citizenship are condemned (Hestermann and Hoven 2020, 732; 736).

It is not surprising that the AfD intentionally presents criminality in one very particular way. But the sheer disproportionality with which their followers are bombarded with is surprising. In an interesting televised one-on-one interview in the summer of 2019,[125] Jörg Meuthen, party leader of the AfD, got pushed on the degree of the constructions made by AfD, when the interviewer confronted him with the results of the research just mentioned. When asked if the AfD does not present a biased picture of reality, if in 95 percent of their press releases that deal with criminality, the perpetrator is revealed as an immigrant, Meuthen denied this on the grounds that AfD only

> *indicates a particular problem situation (…) We take up this issue*, *because* ***the people experience this as substantial change*** (…) *We do not distort the reality* ***but point out acts that take place*** (…) *you can't ignore* ***what is happening*** *in this country and*

[125] Since the end of the 1980s, the so-called *Sommerinterviews* (*Summer Interviews*) are very popular within German society and *ARD* and *ZDF* each produce their own versions. Over the course of many weeks, every party represented in parliament and sometimes other high-ranking officials, like the President, get interviewed one-on-one by leading journalists and these air on Sundays. Statements made in the interviews get reproduced heavily by the media during the infamous politically slow summer season, where genuine political news or events are rare. Hence, they represent excellent opportunities for smaller parties to dominate the media cycle. Further, being interviewed in the *Sommerinterview* gives a young party a lot of legitimacy, of being considered a serious contender in the political arena, to sit at the "big boys table".

> *this leads to an increasing unsettledness in* ***millions of people*****,** ***out of good reason***, *and we take this up*.[126]

This shows the nature of the problem when it comes to crime statistics. Of course, they are crimes that (most likely) have taken place, even though the courts might still downgrade their severity afterwards. But crime statistics and crime reporting do not tell the whole story, even though they pretend to. The AfD is able to make their constructions seem like anchored in reality because of the overwhelming and mainstreamed presence of immigrant crime in public discourse. When they mention in 95 percent of cases in their press releases as specifically non-German suspect we might think this is outrageous, but actually it simply mirrors the behaviour of the major newspapers, who also in 93.5 percent of the cases mention a specifically non-German suspect (Hestermann 2021, 53).

5.5 Conclusion

Here our analysis can come full circle and we can gauge the power of the constructions that the AfD provides and why they might be accepted by parts of the population, even when earlier attempts with similar arguments by far-right parties were not fruitful. On the one hand, Meuthen is right in saying that the AfD highlights acts that do indeed take place and they can refer to the PKS which is seemingly an un-ideological statistic presented by the bureaucracy. But besides a few footnotes in which their limitations are mentioned, those crime statistics purport to present crime as that *what is*

[126] Quoted from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHFllRHnvbs, 05:22-06:33, my emphasis, accessed 12/09/2022. This line of reasoning is of course not unique to Germany but played also a strong part during the Brexit referendum in the UK, for example. There, pro-Brexit politicians 'have presented themselves as hard-nosed truth talkers, crusading against "fake-news", while quiescently responding to people's "concerns" about immigration, no matter how misguided', Maya Goodfellow (2019, 132) writes.

happening, even though they only count suspects and not convicts, immigrants are twice as likely to be accused as a suspect than Germans, many times the courts downgrade the accused crimes, and immigrant crime in the majority of cases is committed against other immigrants. However, media representations and the discussion of elite politicians either do not mention these caveats, seem forgetful about them, or straight-up ignore the explicit warnings of the publishing bodies. Thereby mainstreaming the fear of the "dangerous foreigner", like when comparing crime rates from 2016 to 2017 without contextualising the new crime of "sexual harassment" or the novel inclusion of refugees in the category of "immigrants". Yet this does not stop the Minister of the Interior to declare at the presentation of the crime statistics that '[i]*t is unpleasant that crimes committed by immigrants (…) have risen disproportionately last year**, there is no way to gloss over that***" and '*unfortunately, also the large increase in the area of violent crime is especially due to crimes committed by immigrants*',[127] while the federal crime agency he is heading itself argues in the same year that **the PKS cannot '*make robust statements about the crime rate of immigrants, especially not in relation to the crime rate of Germans***' (BKA 2017, 2). As could be expected, every major media outlet still ran with the headline of risen immigrant crime.

On top of that, TV news reporting practices reached an all-time high in 2017 with regards to mentioning the ethnicity of criminal suspects – for every German suspect ten non-German suspects were mentioned on TV, even though judging by the already faulty PKS there should be at least twice as many German suspects. Previous research has already indicated that the consumption of private TV channel news programmes and their obsession with the criminal immigrant results in a massive over-estimation of crime rates, by 2017 public TV stations had actually overtaken private

[127] See footnote 108.

ones in their association of “crime” and “immigrant”. In total, in over 50 percent of the 2017 news reports that figure an immigrant in one way or another on public TV stations, criminal acts were involved in the story. Already in 2012, did the then Minister of Justice, Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger (2012, 8), complain that the way the media reports on criminal offences helps shape the depicted reality. And this was before the broadsheet media discovered the criminal immigrant as one of their darling topics.

All of the above make up the horizon on top of which the far-right formulates their representative claims. While we will be unable to find any causal effects, I argue that when we take seriously the insights of constructivist theories of political representation, where the political identities of citizens do not prefigure the public debate about supposed “problems” haunting society that require solutions, the interplay of established politicians rhetoric about crime and the representation of crime statistics in the media enable that claims by the far-right can be taken seriously. The result is a horizon where the far-right can, for a significant part of the population, plausibly claim that German society is nearing its doom due to the rise in foreigner crime, that the media actually downplays the “problem” and that they are the only ones brave enough to speak-up and strong willed to solve the problem. In the theory chapter we have ascertained that the elementary ideological effect is reached when an ideology presents itself as un-ideological; when it constructs obviousnesses as obviousnesses. 62 percent of AfD’s voters agree with their parties’ worry about the safety of Germans within their own country, while only 38 percent of the voters of other parties are worried about crime trends (Hilmer et al. 2017, 33). Due to the public discussions since around 2015 on the criminal immigrant, AfD’s supporters, whenever the connection of “immigrants” and “crime” is made, ‘cr[y] out (aloud or in the “still,

small voice of conscience"): "That's obvious! That's right! That's true!"' (Althusser 1994, 129).

6. Televised Political Talk Shows and the Mainstreaming of Far-Right Viewpoints

Meine Stimme gegen die der ganzen Talkshow-Nation
Meine Fäuste gegen ein müdes Halleluja und Bohnen
Meine Zähne gegen eure zahme Revolution
Visionen gegen die totale Television.[128]

My voice against the one of the entire talk show nation
My fists against a weary hallelujah and beans
My teeth against your tame revolution
Visions against total television.

6.1 Introduction

Whereas the past chapter looked at how a particular problem definition the far-right campaigns on, foreigner crime, got mainstreamed, this chapter analyses similar processes but taking one particular media genre into view. I tackle one crucial condition of possibility that helped the far-right transition from the fringes towards becoming a legitimate political actor. This condition of possibility is media exposure, the ability to disseminate their viewpoints to a large audience, and, again, the way their ideas get mainstreamed. As I said earlier, the main reason why Germany had contained the far-right 'close to perfection' (Art 2018, 79) in the past was a *cordon sanitaire*, consciously erected by the media. Yet this "silent consensus" (Art 2006) has broken down with the ascent of the AfD and this chapter traces this development via an under-researched media genre, namely televised political talk shows.

While televised political talk shows are incredibly popular in Germany with millions of viewers tuning in almost every day, they have received surprisingly little academic attention. Even when in recent times cultural elites formulated strong

[128] Lyrics of the song "*Guten Tag*" by the German band "*Wir sind Helden*", quoted from (Schultz 2006, 24–25) and translated by the author. The corresponding 2003 album "*Die Reklamation*" made it to the second place in the German charts and the song itself stayed for 9 weeks in the Top 100.

critiques about those talk shows, especially when it comes to their choices of topics for debate and the way they are discussed. The colloquially formulated charge is that disproportionately often topics close to the far-right's agenda are discussed and on terms that resemble far-right rhetoric. The "German Cultural Council" even demanded that televised political talk shows disappear from the screens for a year to re-think their framing strategies (Deutscher Kulturrat 2018).

Therefore, this chapter analyses these charges scientifically and inquires if televised political talk shows indeed can be said to have aided the far-right in making their claims socially acceptable. This is necessary because while these critiques have existed in the public sphere for a while, most analyses that actually look at televised political talk shows and their topic choices over longer periods of time are done by journalists like the ARD investigative magazine *Monitor* (2017) and personal blogs like crossbencher MP Marco Bülow's.[129] But in academia, talk show trends over time are rarely discussed and if so, analyses are rather dated, like Schultz' (2006, 161), who looked at the episodes of the most popular talk shows around the turn of the millennium.

I inquire about the role of political talk shows for the rise of the far-right via a content analysis of every episode of the four biggest televised talk shows on public television over a time span of over two years, from the summer of 2015 until the national elections in the fall of 2017. Over these 291 episodes I analyse which topics are chosen for discussion by the production companies, how often the far-right receives invitations and to which topics, and, most crucially, with which sentiment or framing the topics are discussed. I conclude that while the AfD is not invited disproportionally often when compared to their election results, it is still of fundamental

[129] In the election of 2021, Bülow lost his mandate and his personal website is currently inaccessible. The original link to the piece was this: https://marco-buelow.de/talkshows-einseitig-und-verzerrend/

importance that they are invited at all, sharing the stage with other parties and therefore appearing more legitimate. I further confirm with data the colloquially voiced charges by the “German Cultural Council” and others that over a timespan of over two years, almost every second talk show episode debates issues close to the agenda of the far-right like refugees, Islam, terrorism, or integration. And, finally, when those topics are discussed, it almost exclusively occurs through a negative framing where a logic of sensationalism prevails, and a doomsday-like threat is created. For example, when talk shows are titled “How criminal are immigrants?” or “How many refugees can we still afford?” But before I turn to this analysis, I need to set the stage by referring to the importance of political talk shows for German political culture, how the far-right has been excluded by talk shows in the past, and develop some further media theoretical insights.

6.2 History and Influence of Talk Shows in Germany

Broadcasted political debates have a long history in Germany. Already via the radio airwaves in the 1920s Weimar Republic there existed specific programmes in which participants discussed the important issues of the day. In similarity to current objectives, these debates were supposed to inform their listeners, be supportive of the formation of opinions, and provide a forum for the healthy exchange of ideas in a civilised way (O. Weber 2019, 21; Goebel 2017, 81–82).

After the severe censorship of free media during Nazi rule, when publicly offering one’s honest opinions involved large dangers, the West German public broadcast system was specifically set up in remembrance of the media’s earlier public

function and inspired by the British BBC. Till this day and just like the BBC,[130] public programmes are by law required to inform, educate, and entertain the public, in an independent and non-profit seeking manner. Debating programmes played from the inception of this mandate an important part. Indeed, General Clay, the highest representative in the US occupied zone, made an effort to revive the radio debates with the ultimate goal 'to promote democratic attitudes and thinking' (quoted in O. Weber 2019, 24) in the German population. Generally speaking, the Western allied nations who occupied Germany until its return to democracy in 1949 were heavily involved in the setting up of the public media system (Steinmetz 2016).

This aim of furthering common understandings, respect, and being open to the arguments of "the other" went throughout the Western occupied zones, even if the titles of some programmes could be rather martial and metaphoric like the production in French occupied territory "Conversation Over the Turnpike" (*Gespräche über dem Schlagbaum)*. But they nevertheless promoted constructive dialogue, in which the intellectual opponent might be attacked yet considered as an equal. Of course, we should not idealise these old formats as they had shortcomings of their own – the overrepresentation of men was back then even more worrisome than it was now – but their contribution to a democratic ethos in Germany can't be understated. It is this benchmark against which current talk shows have to compare themselves to.

Once the modern television system was firmly established, the genre of talk shows then grew considerably first under the influence of new trends in the United

[130] The comparison here understands the construct of the BBC as an "ideal-type" and not its concrete practices in the (past and) present, where the left critiques the BBC's attempt to stay "neutral" by trying too hard to "show both sides of an argument" in contentious topics such as climate change or vaccinations and by the right, who are claiming that the BBC lost its impartiality by reporting on issues in a "too progressive way". Interestingly, this discussion on public media exist to a way lesser extent in Germany besides some conspiracy circles. In Germany, the issue of mandatory TV licences is more polarising.

States in the 60s and 70s (see Ilie 2006) and again with the introduction of the so-called “dual” television system in 1984 – the inception of private TV channels in Western Germany (see Krüger 1992, for an overview of Europe as a whole, see Norris and Holtz-Bacha 2001). The change was two-fold: (i) both the variety of talk shows increased, and (ii) their focus started to shift away from an educative-informing to an entertaining one. Therefore, under the pressure from the hugely successful reality- and human interest talk shows on private channels, also the more serious political talk shows had to adapt and turn away from their public opinion mandate towards more entertainment. This introduced larger amounts of conflict and polarisation into political talk shows (O. Weber 2019, 34).

The origin of the type of talk show that will be of interest to me, televised political talk shows, lies at the beginning of the 1990s when *Talk im Turm* (“Talk in the Tower”) started to air on private *Sat. 1* and from the end of the decade, *Sabine Christiansen*, on public ARD (Goebel 2017, 83). These shows are the forbearers to the current political talk shows because they have similar guest structures, debating norms, and topic choices and framings. In them, a moderator introduces a contentious, hotly debated topic of the day as well as the guests and a snapshot of their opinions on it before they guide through the discussion. Guests number mostly four to six, rarely less or more, and most of them are professional politicians. The invitations are carefully weighted, often members of the ruling party or coalition and the opposition are present, and someone from the political left can tussle with someone from the right. Depending on the topic of the show there are also academics, journalists, or civil society actors from NGOs, trade unions, or the churches present. In a very few cases everyday people are invited or grade-A celebrities like musicians and actors. All of the talk shows under consideration in this chapter also have a studio audience, which for some

analysts is a defining characteristic of the “show” aspect of the talk show (Schultz 2006, 19).

To be more concrete, I briefly describe a prototypical political talk show as aired on public television. On 8 December 2016, Maybrit Illner discussed the topic “*Refugees under suspicion – Culture of Welcoming nearing its end?*[131] with five guests. She had invited Hannelore Kraft from the Social Democrats, Cemile Giousouf from the Christian Democrats, the Green major of Freiburg Dieter Salomon, the head of the police union Reiner Wendt, and Mazur Hossein Sharifi, a refugee. The description of the episode reads as follows:

> *refugee volunteers are shocked, right-wing populists feel validated – the murder* [of a German girl committed by a refugee] *is impacting the entire country with a mixture of fear, sadness, and agitation. Is integration impossible? Have we not even started with it? Or is there a lack of will on behalf of the newcomers to accept German values? Is an answer of deterrence, isolation, and deportation enough versus criminal immigrants? And how realistic is that? What has actually been achieved since September 2015 and what hasn't?* (fernsehserien.de 2016).

From the beginning of the 1990s, the amount of time channels dedicated to talk shows as a whole increased greatly. While the five largest TV channels, some public and some private, spent less than one percent of their total airtime on talk shows in 1991, this figure rose to five percent in 1995 and to over ten percent in 1999 (Krüger 2002, 141). Nowadays, the hosts of the most famous talk shows are well-known celebrities in Germany who earn large wages and whose private life is extensively covered by the media. One aspect that is currently disregarded in the public critiques of political talk shows is that oftentimes the hosts of the respective debates run their own production company which is tasked with producing the debate and getting paid for that service

[131] In this thesis, whenever a quote is written entirely in italics, this indicates a translation from German to English by myself. If I want to highlight a part of a quote, this will be done in bold to avoid confusion.

by the television companies.[132] Therefore, the lawfully written down interests of the public broadcasters like educating and informing the public compete with the economic interest by the production company to create drama and increase viewers. This fact has to be kept in mind when we discuss the increasingly sensational tabloidization of political talk shows on public TV channels.

6.3 Media Effects and Relevance of Television

But before I turn in more detail to televised political talk shows, I need to turn towards the question of media effects and the overall relevance of the TV that couldn't be tackled in the media theory part of Chapter 3.

The television in particular occupies nowadays a greater position than maybe ever. Both generally speaking, more people inform themselves politically via the television than via newspapers (Albertson and Lawrence 2009) and in Germany specifically, where in 2020, 38 percent of respondents mainly used the former and only 17 percent the latter (statista 2020). Additionally, the television ranks highest when it comes to ascriptions of authenticity and credibility (Goebel 2017, 27). This is an important factor when analysing the construction of social and political reality, especially given the largely negative framing that occurs in talk shows. Lastly, due to the incredible reach of television, it unites the most diverse users of any media, to the

[132] From the five most watched televised political talk shows, only one host does not own the production company tasked with running the show, Maybrit Illner. Sometimes the ownership is more, sometimes less obvious. Anne Will is director of "Will Media" and the talk show is their only production. *Hart aber fair* is produced by "Ansager & Schnipselmann", which is co-owned by the host Frank Plasberg and the creator of the short intro-movies, Jürgen Schulte. Markus Lanz, from the talk show with the same name, owns 50 percent of the production company "Mhoch2 TV", which since 2014 otherwise only produces a yearly aired recap show with him as moderator. Lastly, Sandra Maischberger is director of "Vincent productions", which is responsible for her show but also has a larger portfolio of productions.

extent that even largely unpolitical citizens get into contact with political topics almost by accident (Tenscher 2002, 61).

Regarding media effects and the reception of the viewers, two important questions emerge concerning the expectation and attitude viewers approach talk shows with – (i) do they want to be informed or entertained, and (ii) do they watch passively or actively? It comes to no surprise that these questions are hard to answer, and previous research is not unequivocal. But, according to Schulz (Schultz 2006, 320), existing studies discern a positive effect between the consumption of talk shows and the formation of opinions. Similarly, a majority of viewers claim that political talk shows are more informative than debates in the national parliament (Darschin and Zubayr 2002, 212); another indicator that the principal motivation of viewers' is the gaining of information. Yet, the landmark study in Germany on political talk shows from Holly, Kühn, and Püschel (1986) sees the entertainment element as dominant. However, I ascribe political talk shows the capability to influence their viewer's perception of society - also following my constructivist media theoretical approach – for two further reasons.

First, even if Holly, Kühn, and Püschel are correct in stating that viewers mainly turn towards political talk shows for entertainment purposes, this still does not exclude a formative viewing experience. Roth (2015) shows convincingly that even when an entertainment character prevails, this can still bring people to think about politics, reflect on arguments, and construct viewpoints. She calls this form of media reception where individuals take the contents of discussions into a conversation with their lived experience a form of "eudemonic entertainment" (Roth 2015, 185).[133] Similarly, Stuart Hall points out that no matter the character of a media message, it still needs to be

[133] For a similar point in a source in the English language, see Kim and Vishak (2008).

decoded and understood, even if it is supposed to merely entertain – the process of which is not straightforward:

> Before this message can have an “effect” (however defined), satisfy a “need” or be put to a “use”, it must first be appropriated as a meaningful discourse and be meaningfully decoded. It is this set of decoded meanings which “have an effect”, influence, entertain, instruct or persuade, with very complex perceptual, cognitive, emotional, ideological or behavioural consequences (Hall 1980, 130).

Second, even if we assume the viewers as mainly passive ones who only watch absent-mindedly and there is no direct connection between consumption and opinion formation, one important group of viewers are political and economic elites as well as journalists. Among the political journalists of the major media outlets, *Sabine Christiansen* had a viewership of over 50 percent at her heydays (Schultz 2006, 291). Similarly, analyses of Twitter activity of the hashtags of political talk shows demonstrate that the majority of tweets sent out during broadcasts stem from politicians and journalists (König and König 2017), findings that have been replicated abroad (Larsson 2013). Some newspapers, like the nationally available *Frankfurter Rundschau*, even offer theatre-style analyses and critiques the day after *Maybrit Illner* airs and the WDR publishes a fact-check style analysis after every *hart aber fair*. Therefore, the topics and arguments discussed in political talk shows get regurgitated on a national stage through journalists and are taken up by decision makers in society. In sum, based on my media theoretical understanding and the above, I contend that televised political talk shows ‘*create a public consciousness of highly charged political topics*’ (Keppler 2015, 109).

6.4 Availability and Audience of Political Talk Shows

Political debate programmes can be watched almost daily on the two major public television stations, *ARD* and *ZDF*.[134] In terms of total airtime, their heydays were around the years of 2012 and 2013, when during four randomly drawn weeks the two stations spent a little less than an hour each day between 5pm and 1am on political talk shows. During the years 2015 till 2017, the timeframe I look at in this chapter, the minutes number between 28 and 36 for *ARD* and 39 and 51 for *ZDF* according to the same criteria (Krüger, Zapf-Schramm, and Jung 2019, 238). These numbers might seem small, though their conceived relevance changes when compared to the time that news programmes are on air. News programmes are aired quite stable throughout the years for a little more than an hour each day (Krüger, Zapf-Schramm, and Jung 2019, 236). Therefore, political talk shows are on air only roughly 1/3 less than news programmes. However, even though in total airtime the two are quite similar, the interest of media scholars is vastly greater for televised news programmes than for televised political talk shows (see Sommer and Ruhrmann 2010; Drüeke 2016; Hestermann 2018). This points to an interesting logic of media academic's discourse *about* media discourse.

The same can be said not only with regards to time spent on air but also to viewership. In 2016, the flagship news segments of ZDF at 7pm and 9.45pm have slightly less than four million viewers on average, while the most watched news show

[134] Compared to the UK we can say that they are most similar to BBC1 and BBC2, though if ITV were funded publicly the better comparison for ARD and ZDF would be BBC1 and ITV. The further compartmentalisation of German TV stations is difficult to understand for outsiders. So called "third programmes" are organised as regional, public TV stations and also produce content that is then aired on ARD, such as by the WDR ("West German Broadcasting Company").

at 8pm on ARD is watched by five million people[135] (Zubayr and Gerhard 2017, 136). In the same year, the average viewership of political talk shows on the two TV stations looks like this: *Anne Will* 3.95 million, *hart aber fair* 3.13 million, *Maybrit Illner* 2.64 million, ZDF *donnerstalk* 1.93 million, *Markus Lanz* 1.58 million, *Menschen bei Maischberger* 1.47 million (Zubayr and Gerhard 2017, 138). Additionally, the number of people who watched at least two political talk shows per year was at the beginning of the millennium 26 million (Darschin and Zubayr 2002, 211) – around half of eligible voters. Therefore, it is not an overstatement to say that political talk shows are very popular in Germany. Yet, regarding the concrete viewership of talk shows there is surprisingly little academic research or publicly available information. Only some common-places can be highlighted. Those are that the viewers of public television are a bit older than the average viewer (just as the average AfD voter) and that those viewers turn away from fictional entertainment towards non-fictional programmes (Rager and Hassemer 2004, 182).

6.5 The Far-Right on the Screen, Past and Present

Above I have given some reasons why we should consider political talk shows aired on television and the messages communicated in them as important for the shaping of social reality. However, and in following-up on the quote of Jean-Marie Le Pen where he stated that the participation in an hour-long televised debate completely changed his image with viewers, we also have to inquire about the strategies that media outlets have used and use nowadays when dealing with the far-right (see section 3.6). It cannot be overstated how important it is that in Germany today we can see and listen

[135] Or closer to 10 million viewers if one counts the simultaneous screening at regional public TV stations as well.

to far-right actors almost daily in front of an audience of millions, whereas in previous decades the media had an unspoken agreement to not cover the far-right at all; to put up a "*cordon sanitaire*" (Art 2006, 2007). In comparison with other countries which experienced far-right support way earlier. '[i]n Germany, even the initially moderate Republicans were by and large denied access to television'. But neighbouring 'successful right-wing populist parties such as the French National Front and the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) could count on extensive media coverage. In German (…) newspapers, not a single sentence gives readers a hint of these parties' policy stances' (Bornschier 2010, 174). Hence, this cognisant strategy was largely responsible for the failure of the far-right to make their viewpoints publicly acceptable after the end of the Second World War until very recently.

The ease with which members of the *AfD* were incorporated into the daily business of televised political talk shows is therefore very surprising. Until recently it was the case that political newcomers received invitations – if at all – only to non-political, more human-interest focussed talk shows (Tenscher 2002, 64). In the most popular political talk shows, however, a strong "talk show elite" of recurring guests kept a check on who could present their views in this favourable setting – until the *AfD* was made part of exactly that elite more or less over-night, as we will see.

The short history of far-right invitations to political talk shows pre-AfD speaks volumes. One infamous example are the violent protests against the invitation of the former head of the far-right *Republikaner*, Franz Schönhuber, to "*3nach9*" ("three [moderators] past nine")[136] in 1990. The talk show begins with an open discussion on how to deal with a large mass of people protesting outside the glass container in which

[136] "*3nach9*" was one of the first talk shows which specifically picked topics and invited guests according to the logics of dramatization that got popularised in the human interest talk shows on private TV channels in the 1990s. The talk show historian Keller (2004) writes that for the creators of "*3nach9*", '*the experience became apparent that topics high on the sensationalism scale promised a larger viewership'*.

the show is shot. Shortly before going on air even a stone was thrown against the glass, shattering some of it. Every once in a while, one can hear banging against the glass construction. In a bizarre moment, one can see riot police securing the glass container while within it the discussion of how to move forward continues.

After one attempt to pretend everything is normal by one moderator and finally start the discussion, another interjects and wants it understood that within the production team there were also heavy discussions whether or not to invite Schönhuber – to the extent that some members from the technical team declined to come to work in protest. In a way that is totally incomprehensible to current television productions, one of the moderators at one point takes a camera and microphone and leaves the container to interview the protesters derailing the production to ask about their motivations and demands. What is more, when the team discusses live on air whether to proceed or cancel the debate out of fear of violence – one discussant is visibly distressed, another has already left the set - one moderator in a very democratic move goes into the audience to ask about their preference on the question, if they still feel safe. All live on air. Eventually the police secure the area around the production site and the discussion can finally start.[137]

The outrage to another invitation of Franz Schönhuber to a personality talk show two years later, in 1992, was not smaller. In the show named after host Thomas Gottschalk, the latter was so unable to critically confront Schönhuber in a discussion about right-wing violence and xenophobia that a public scandal ensued. In the wake of which other talk shows, including the most-popular one, "*Christiansen*", publicly denounced this airing of far-right viewpoints and vowed to not do so themselves (O. Weber 2019, 104). We will come to an analysis of the topics and invited guests of

[137] A somewhat incomplete recording of the talk show in question can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xDbDsC7u7vE, accessed 12/09/2022.

recent talk shows soon but suffice it to say for now that there are no violent protests outside production sets, members of the technical teams of the television stations refusing to come to work, or some talk shows publicly barring the far-right from participation. If anything, the extreme and colourful style of the far-right is used in promotional work and to create interest in potential viewers. Nowadays, the previous agreement of the different media actors to wrap a *cordon sanitaire* around the far-right does not exist anymore – in the words of Frank Plasberg, *hart aber fair* host: '*it is not the job of journalists to keep down parties. That is, I beg you, the job of political competitors*' (der Spiegel 2017).

6.6 Critiques of the Format

In recent years, however, more and more controversy surrounded political talk shows. But this is not to say that critiques around the format, the way the discussions take place, and what topics are chosen aren't new. As I mentioned, the first book length study of political talk shows by Holly, Kühn and Püschel (1986) already has their assessment in its sub-title – a "*media-specific staging of propaganda as discussion*". This charge of propaganda and self-presentation is echoed by Schultz (2006, 14). The media scholars Jens Tenscher (2002) and Lutz Hachmeister (Deutschlandfunk 2019) speak about a "*talkshowisation of politics*" or a "*ritual of simulated politics*" that is seemingly taking place every day and closer to scripted reality, respectively.

Even established politicians – also those who participate in political talk shows – do not have too high opinions on them. The then president of the *Bundestag*, Wolfgang Thierse, once complained that formal institutions like the parliament are losing in importance and are actually in a state of competition with political talk shows

when it comes to the communication of the stances on current issues of the different parties (Schultz 2006, 26). We can see the degree of sensationalism coming to the fore when even the deputy chair-man of the pro-business FDP, Wolfgang Kubicki (2020, 54), calls them "*ritualised quarrels*" and himself complains that the sensationalism in titles and topics is done to increase the viewership numbers and not public knowledge and opinion.

But by now the arguments have entered the public sphere very vividly. So far, the critiques have mainly come from academics who complain about the difference between aspiration and reality of political talk shows, but this critique rarely entered the general public. This changed with a couple of statements by the Broadcasting Council of the WDR, a body which oversees the productions under its shield, such as *hart aber fair* or *Maischberger*. The body's responsibility, amongst other things, is that TV stations work according to their by law stated responsibilities and, according to the broadcaster's website, '*represents the interests of the general public*' (WDR n.d.). In 2012, the Council demanded for the first time from ARD to reduce the amount of talk shows, because '*all fears have become true*' (Süddeutsche Zeitung 2012). They built upon an earlier critique from 2010 when, in their eyes, the amount of political talk shows had reached a critical level and after that more talk shows were still added to the programme. The similarities in topics and the lack of critical inquiries were other points of emphasis.

After little changes were implemented – only one talk show was discontinued and only due to a private choice by the moderator - the body saw itself forced to publish another statement in 2015, reiterating their strong critique of topic choices and guests. Now they added more concrete demands such as a move away from the "top stories of the day" to not only recycle the same topics, called for more balanced reporting, and

that more women and people with a migration background should receive invitations (WDR Rundfunkrat 2015).

But the most excruciating critique followed in 2017. While earlier, the tone of the council was still friendly, and no particular productions called out by name, now the *Rundfunkrat* did not spare two of its own productions, *hart aber fair* and *Maischberger*. They assessed that these two shows too often bet on '*populist controversies* [*populistische Reizthemen]*' and castigated the '*alarmist escalation both in titles as well as moderation on negative expectations, disconcertment, and fear, because through that populism and simplification thrive to the disadvantage of background information*' (WDR Rundfunkrat 2017).

6.7 Self-Interpretations of Talk Show Producers

One of the major problems with political talk shows is the non-conscious role of their producers regarding the societal processes this media format impacts. In their self-interpretations, the producers legitimate their choices on topics with the argument that they discuss those issues with which the public is currently preoccupied. Therefore, they are either unaware or ignore the constructivist insights of media theory, according to which the interests and viewpoints of the public heavily depend on what they see, hear, and read instead of what they experience directly in their everyday lives. In that vein, fears of the immigrant other, for example, rarely originate from particular lived experiences. Instead, the sensational coverage and scapegoating when it comes to immigrant violence[138] can be held responsible to a large degree for xenophobic attitudes and the willingness to support the far-right.

[138] See Chapter 5.

This occurs against the backdrop of the common-place - almost Habermassian-like - defence that a TV network stays “neutral” and only provides a platform on which different actors provide viewpoints, from which the viewers then self-consciously select the best ones. Such an explanation was put forward already in the 1930s, when Hans Flesch, one of the radio broadcasting pioneers, described the role of the producer and the conception of the receiver like this:

> *the listener shall be conveyed a genuine picture of the political life, from which he can learn and make judgements. The broadcaster, which gives voice to the different orientations, has to make sure that the programme as a whole stays neutral* (quoted in O. Weber 2019, 22).

One could now imagine that this is an idealised position, which was held in past times but producers by now have learned their lessons, especially following the role of propaganda in the world wars. Far from it. One particular incidence revived the debate about the role of the media and their possible framing role. In June 2018, *hart aber fair* aired an episode that wasn’t too different from many others before it, but it sparked a Twitter exchange that set the terms of the debate. The title of the episode in question was “Refugees and Criminality – The Discussion” and was accompanied by the following intro: ‘*There is no denying*, *young men, fled from war and archaic societies – for many here a reason to be concerned and afraid. Can those refugees even be integrated? How unsafe will Germany be because of that*?’.[139]

As I said, for current standards the episode isn’t even framed and titled too badly. But following innocuous Twitter activity questioning the topic choice of immigrant criminality after it had been debated many times before, the *hart aber fair* team saw itself forced to publicly respond with two tweets. In one, they defended the topic choice

[139] Quoted from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B3Wy0ucJfbo&t=1s, 00:00:25 – 00:00:38, accessed 12/09/2022.

due to the fact that right before the debate, the network aired a documentary titled “The Girl and the Refugee”, in which two recent attacks - one fatal - by refugees on young women were chronicled. *Hart aber fair* ended the tweet and their defence with a sentence resembling Flesch’s conception 90 years earlier: ‘*topic important, outcome undecided – the viewers choose which arguments convince them*’.[140] But less than an hour later the editorial staff sent out another tweet, which reads, decisively: *‘framing? As journalist we know little about that term. We try to show those things that people care about* ***as they are***’.[141]

These quotes show that the journalists have seemingly been absent from their class on framing and ideology in media productions. They hide behind an assumed neutrality, by supposedly only providing a forum in which in a Habermasian manner the best argument will win out. If *hart aber fair* airs out of twelve consecutive episodes a full ten about refugees, terrorism, and immigrant violence from January 11th, 2016 till the 18th of April, 2016, then that must have been the only political topic on people’s mind in those three months. This supposed neutrality holds true for all kinds of informative, educative, and political media genres, as I have already indicated in Chapter 5 on the construction of immigrant violence. Or in the words of William Connolly (2002, 24–25): ‘news programmes and talk shows are dominated by talking heads who purport to report things as they are, even as they sometimes expose “bias” in other shows or politicians’.

Following the public critique, Sandra Maischberger defended her own talk show in an op-ed for *Die Zeit* on June 13th, 2018. Two days after the “framing debate” kicked off, her talk show on the topic “The Debate on Islam: Where Does Tolerance End” aired; a title that was only changed in the last moment from “Are We Too Tolerant

[140] *Hart aber fair* tweet from June 3rd, 2018.
[141] *Hart aber fair* tweet from June 3rd, 2018, my emphasis.

Versus Islam?". In the piece, she says that the citizens '*do not imagine societal ruptures but experience them'* (Maischberger 2018). I do not know how she would answer a question on the fact that the fear of refugees is strongest in those areas of Germany which accommodate the lowest number of refugees. Or that Germans overestimate the Muslim population in their country by 300 percent.[142] Instead, she contends that '*the migration question has polarised society beyond any doubt'*, but does not grant that political talk shows have anything to do with this polarisation or the rise of the far-right as a whole. Lastly, she also claims that the last-minute title change came about after internal discussions already before the *hart aber fair* Twitter-framing controversy, though this is un-verifiable.

Talk show hosts completely deny any implication in poisoning the public debate through sensationalist and black-and-white framing choices.[143] Their conception of the attitudes and political identities of the public is similar from the political scientists who ascribe the rise of the far-right due to modernisation losers, whose political identities fall from the sky; who just happen to identify the way they identify. Frank Plasberg from *hart aber fair* argues in that vein, when he says he would be flattered if the television could be that influential, but truly the medium '*cannot help establish a party* ***if there is not a need in the population***' (der Spiegel 2017, my emphasis). But how that "need" comes about is completely disregarded. Similarly, Anne Will argues that the recent

[142] See Literature Review, Chapter 2.

[143] In other contexts, especially in the US and to an extent in the UK, there could also be a "freedom of speech" argument be made. As in, where media actors accept the performative power of their actions yet defend them due to their right to voice their opinion or their duty to offer a wide spread of opinions. Yet, this is not the case in Germany, as the talk show hosts do not accept their performative powers and have to be formally neutral due to public broadcasting laws anyways. A rule such as in the UK, where every party over a certain electoral threshold needs to be represented at least at times in shows like "Question Time" does not exist in Germany. The only dimension in that direction in Germany are elite actors decrying that "some things can't be said out loud but should be". Not noticing the contradiction that they are actually saying them, often unpunished. Usually, this is followed, in an interpellative way, by an argument around "the bravery to speak out the truth", as we have seen during the Sarrazin debate in Chapter 4.

critiques of talk shows stem from a charged atmosphere in the population, but denies any responsibility in creating this atmosphere (Focus 2018). The co-producer of *hart aber fair* asserts that the population has the feeling that the political class does not have a firm grasp of the situation anymore (der Spiegel 2017), but how talk shows have contributed to this powerless feeling he does not talk about.

After the two critique worthy episodes of *hart aber fair* and *Maischberger* in the same week, the "German Cultural Council"[144] demanded a year-long break of public, televised political talk shows so that they can re-think their framing strategies during that time. This demand was clearly ignored as the talk shows continued on just as before. But the Cultural Council's head, Olaf Zimmermann, argued for their recommendation in this way, which indicates the seriousness of the situation:

> *More than 100 talk shows in ARD and ZDF have informed us about the topics of refugees and Islam since 2015 and have thereby helped the AfD to gain access to the Bundestag. The rift in society has increased since 2015 greatly. Yesterday evening in the talk show of ARD they debated seriously the act of shaking hands as a presumed expression of German culture (…) Maybe a talk show free time will help integration efforts in this country*? (Deutscher Kulturrat 2018).

6.8 Setting the Stage – Theory and Research Gap

I will in a moment analyse these claims which *suspect* a strongly negative framing of talk show debates around issues that the far-right is campaigning on in more detail. Such an analysis has not been done yet and so far, only speculations been made in media blogs and op-eds or interviews. This is not to say that the tabloidization of talk show titles is a recent phenomenon, though there are indicators that many years ago

[144] Despite its grand name, the "German Cultural Council" does not carry massive weight or importance as it is simply a non-representative body made up of (important) persons engaged in the cultural sector. Therefore, we should not overestimate the importance of its demand, but it is nevertheless telling that we even got to this point where televised political talk shows were asked to stop to exist for a while.

their framings were more tempered.[145] Certainly, this recent trend has prefigured the rise of the far-right, as Schultz already concludes about talk show titles in the 90s and 00s:

> *The titles of episodes … are preferably introduced as if the German society is close to doom … political questions, social challenges, and specific problems are sharpened towards an all-encompassing, alarmist diagnosis of crisis, coupled with a traditional, nationalist point of view: Germany is in crisis, the German society is in danger…* (Schultz 2006, 166–67).

But I want to inquire specifically if talk shows based on topics related to the core campaign issues of the far-right, such as migration, refugees, integration, and Islam, are framed in more sensationalist and gloomy terms than other topic areas? Is it the case that generally there exist a strong "us" and "them" or "insider" and "outsider" dichotomy within political talk shows? Are talk show titles mostly "punching down" on members of society but rarely "punching up" towards the elite?

We have lots of anecdotal evidence about sentiment and framing in talk shows, but no one has yet looked at a comparison of different talk shows over a long period of time. Weber (2019, 60), for example, mentions that in the year of 2015, during the "migration crisis", *Anne Will* only aired two episodes in which a sympathetical framing occurred; one asking if Germany is too merciless and one covering violence against immigrants. I want to provide more factual evidence and take all the major talk shows into account during the crucial time when the AfD radicalised itself following the election of Frauke Petry and Jörg Meuthen as party chairs at the beginning of July 2015 until their breakthrough into parliament in the fall of 2017. I consider this period

[145] For example, Keller (Keller 2009, 193–98) lists in his historical overview of the talk shows genre in Germany some titles of debates aired in the 1960s. The most topically similar ones to those discussed these days are titled "*The situation in the Eastern bloc*", "*Who is paying for welfare policy*?", "*Does automation create unemployment*?", or "[The] *Living together of* [religious] *denominations in Germany*".

significant, because since mid-2015 the party has clearly chosen the far-right instead of liberal-conservative path. That period was crucial, because historically, mainstream political actors and the media in Germany had always implemented a *cordon sanitaire* to stop the rise of any far-right party. However, this time it failed and as the AfD increasingly radicalised it also gained more supporters, going against conventional wisdom in political science, where fringe parties gain more votes by moving towards the political centre and stop being one issue parties - as many Green parties have done.

I have chosen to focus on sentiment in the titles and introductions of political talk shows not only because they are under-researched, but also out of theoretical concerns. The concepts of “preferred reading” and “second-level agenda setting” are helpful in this regard. What both of the concepts try to get at is that every media representation – by definition and through constraints like space and time – necessarily can only present one or a few aspects of a phenomenon. This is most clearly visible for newspaper articles, where news headlines and lead-ins ‘define the overall situation and indicate to the reader a preferred overall meaning of the text’ (van Dijk 1988, 40, see also Hall 1980). I take it that the same holds true for talk show titles and the short introductions which accompany them. Further, those introductions that I use to discern the sentiment of an episode are most of the time read out aloud by the moderator at the beginning of each episode and serve as a basis for the discussion.

Second-level agenda setting also points in a similar direction. While first-level agenda setting encompasses the salience of issues - *what* to think about - the former draws attention on *how* to think about issues (Weaver 2007, 142). We can say with reference to the discussion above that the pure counting and quantifying of topic choices of talk shows has been done (non-scientifically) before and hence the first-

level agenda setting of the genre accounted for, but not the second-level sentiment analysis. I will analyse the ways in which the episodes are framed, through which 'some aspects of a perceived reality [are selected] and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation'. This happens 'through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration'[146] – any phenomenon could be looked at through a different lens and via a different problem definition which invites different solutions. To come back to the example I gave above of the talk show on the murder of a German girl by a refugee, in the synopsis that works as the basis of discussion there is no mention of over-arching patterns of masculine sexual violence, the focus is solely on the foreign other who does not respect "our" norms and how to deal with those people going forward - if there even is a way.

I especially want to inquire about the role of negative framing on the construction of political identities. The limited research that exists about the influence of sentiment in media texts on political views – in the main done on newspaper articles or news broadcasts – seems to ascribe a privileged role to negativity in "gripping" subjects (Glynos and Howarth 2007). This body of research seems to suggest that 'negative information carr[ies] a greater power to transfer attribute agendas from the media to the public' (Bowe, Fahmy, and Wanta 2013, 641).

For example, Wanta, Golan, and Lee (2004) looked at second-level agenda setting when it comes to the valence in newscasts of four TV stations about foreign countries and the public's attitudes towards those countries. They came to the surprising conclusion that while, as expected, negative news coverage was strongly

[146] These two famous definitions of framing are from Entman and Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss and Ghanem. I could not source either of them and hence quoted both from McCombs and Ghanem (2001, 70).

related to a negative view on the country (rated on a thermometer score of 0-100), the relationship did not hold true for positive coverage. Similarly, the results from Hester and Gibson (2003) point in the same direction, as they concluded that negative news coverage over the state of the economy – independent of its actual state – resulted in lowered expectations about the economy in the future. But as it is usually the case with studies on media effects, the results are not unequivocal, as Bowe et al. (2013) did not find strong evidence that media coverage of Islam influenced attitudes towards the religion. However, I contend that highly charged 'phrases as "radical Muslims" (…) may be said to have achieved a high degree of attitudinal saturation (…) through being constantly repeated in negative contexts, they have accrued marked emotivity' (Molek-Kozakowska 2013, 189).

The last theoretical insight I want to discuss before analysing talk show titles and intros relates to recent advances in neuroscience and how our brains process different kinds of information. This field of study has, among other things, brought similar conclusions forward as the more descriptive agenda setting and communication research. Modern social neuroscience research developed a conceptualisation of the brain that is congruent with our understanding of the constructed character of political identities. Just as there are no fixed, pre-conceived, or essential identities waiting to be discovered, neuroscience research also contends that understanding the brain as a master control site, where an "I" is represented as a single entity, is misconceived (Blank 2017, 109; see also Connolly 2002).

Yet not only negativity has an interesting effect on how information is processed (content), also the way information enters the brain can have surprising consequences (form). One major characteristic of talk show titles is that they are worded often as (principally) open ended questions – yet the tone already heavily implies a "preferred

reading". One of the most respected researcher in cognitive science and its influence on politics, Elisabeth Wehling, explained the issue nicely in an interview on talk shows (see Deutschlandfunk Kultur 2018). According to her, based on how the human mind works, information formulated in a question enters the mind as an assertion. Therefore, when episodes are formulated with titles like "How dangerous is Islam really?" or "Are there too many refugees in Germany?", the brain does not save the information as an open-ended question that is yet to be decided but remembers "Islam-dangerous" and "too-many-refugees-Germany".[147]

By 2018, one of the talk show hosts, Anne Will, has even admitted that they used this rhetorical strategy too much and that it might have harmful consequences. She said that after some deliberation between the producers, they have decided that they need to '*disarm. Both in episode titles as well as in our make-up of guests and in the question of how we construct our episodes'.* However, she does not claim full responsibility as she has the questionably high expectation from her viewership that they supposedly are able to '*effortlessly (…) distance themselves from the posing of the question if it should end up badly brought-up or tendentious'* (Focus 2018). I want to pay close attention and code for talk show titles from 2015 until 2017 to quantify which topics are debated and from which angle they are introduced.

[147] This point also relates to the impartiality vs. balance debate that is raging within media circles – not the least since the COVID-19 pandemic and debates around supposedly unsafe vaccines or debates on climate change. The issue at stake here is that just because there are alternative views, e.g., on man-made climate, change does not mean they have to be given space out of a duty of not taking sides and allowing debates to flourish. At stake is an impression that there must be two sides to a debate and that "unpleasant" viewpoints must also receive space.

6.9 Method and Data

I do this by looking at televised political talk show titles and written intros[148] by the producers from the particular moment when the AfD radicalised itself towards the far-right fringe. On 5 July 2015[149], the more liberal-conservative wing in the party around Bernd Lucke got ousted by the more xenophobic-nationalist wing for party leadership around Jörg Meuthen and Frauke Petry.[150] The end of the analysis is the date of the national election in which the AfD gained representation in the parliament for the first time, on 24 September 2017. I include the "Big 4" German political talk shows aired on the public networks *ARD* and *ZDF* in the analysis – Anne Will*,* Maischberger[151], *hart aber fair,* and Maybrit Illner*.* This selection of the time frame and the talk shows produces a sample of 291 unique episodes, and Table 6.1 shows the distribution per year and talk show.

Table 6.1 Talk show episode corpus by talk show and year

	Anne Will (ARD)	*hart aber Fair* (ARD)	Maischberger (ARD)	Maybrit Illner (ZDF)	
2015	16	14	15	18	
2016	30	37	34	35	
2017	22	24	20	26	
Total	68	75	69	79	291

In this section, I analyse a total of four research questions, presented below, via a content analysis (see Krippendorff 2018) done with the Qualitative Data Analysis

[148] I have collected all talk show titles and written intros from the TV archival website "fernsehserien.de". The intros vary in length from show to show and sometimes even within shows but usually number between 30 and 150 words. I have given one example of such an intro in section 6.2.
[149] Most televised political talk shows have a summer break in which no or only a few episodes are aired, so the vast majority of the 2015 corpus only starts in mid-August or the beginning of September.
[150] Lucke then founded his own party but it never entered into relevance.
[151] Until 13 January 2016 the talk show was called *Menschen bei Maischberger* ("people at/with Maischberger").

Software “NVivo 12”. For the most part, the content analysis is as objective as it can be, e.g., when I code for the guests invited and topics discussed. But I will highlight when I make a potentially questionable assumption or move.

6.10 Content Analysis of Televised Political Talk Shows, 2015-2017

I am looking at four distinct issues via the content analysis. Those are (1) the distribution of invitation per political party, (2) the distribution of topics discussed, (3) to which topics the far-right gets invited to, and (4) the framing of talk shows in terms of valence or sentiment. For each field of interest, I formulate a research question and accompany it with a hypothesis that reflects on what is at stake in each question. The hypotheses further help me to focus on things my data speaks about, fleshes out how the data relates to theory, and how the combination of the two enables me to make certain claims (or not). In line with my methodological approach discussed in the introduction, they should therefore be less seen as objectively testable but rather as guiding my thinking.

RQ1: How often do members of each party get invited to political talk shows and how proportionate are the invitations to their last elections results and the one taking place right at the end of the sample?

H1: Parties that are invited disproportionately compared to their election results receive disproportionate opportunities to present their viewpoints and appear to have a larger following than they do in actuality.

Table 6.2 shows which parties are invited how often to political talk shows and how this compares to their election results. The ratio calculated in the last row should be read in a way where when a party receives 5 percent of all votes and is invited to 10 percent of all talk shows, then it gets 100 percent more invites than its vote share would suggest if vote shares and invitations were evenly distributed.[152] Those results do not provide too much insight for our mainstreaming hypothesis, at least in purely numerical terms. The two catch-all-parties CDU and SPD receive very similar opportunities to be present in talk shows, with +70% vs +63% and +116% vs +105%, respectively, when compared to their 2013 and 2017 election results. With regards to the far-right, surprisingly, their 34 invitations put them only into the middle of the over-invitations when compared to their 2013 election results and the other parties. Concerning their 2017 election result, it is even the only party in the sample that was under-invited. This refutes the criticism voiced colloquially by civil society actors who assumed an over-representation of the AfD in political talk shows.[153]

[152] It is only to be expected that the ratio of talk show invites compared to election results is skewed strongly towards the positive – many times members of three or more political parties participate in a discussion and there are not enough major parties to go around.

[153] See, for example, the statement by David Begrich, an expert on right-wing extremism, who said that '*in the publicly televised talk shows there was a phase with something like an enduring representation of resentment. Back then there was no format, where the discussion took place without the AfD'* (Heinrich Böll Stiftung 2017).

Table 6.2 Talk show invitations by party and election result[154]

	CDU	SPD	Linke	Grüne	CSU	FDP	AfD
Total participants	171	127	66	85	76	37	34
% Talk shows invited	58%	42%	22%	29%	26%	13%	12%
2013 election results[155]	34.1%	25.7%	8.6%	8.4%	7.4%	4.8%	4.7%
2017 election results[156]	26.8%	20.5%	9.2%	8.9%	6.2%	10.7%	12.6%
+/- invite/result 2013	+70%	+63%	+159%	+245%	+251%	+170%	+155%
+/- invite/result 2017	+116%	+105%	+139%	+226%	+319%	+21%	-5%

Therefore, while we may criticise that the AfD received any invitations to begin with - that a *cordon sanitaire* was never erected against them while it was in the past - but they are also not given too many opportunities to join discussions in political talk shows. What is more concerning and also more helpful with regards to answering the question of how the far-right could make their viewpoints acceptable is looking at which topics they were invited to contribute. But before we can turn to this question, we have to establish which topics were discussed in the first place.

RQ2: Which topics were discussed most in the four biggest political talk shows from the summer of 2015 till the autumn of 2017?

[154] The parties are CDU (Christian Democratic Union), SPD (Social Democratic Party), die Linke (the Left), CSU (Christian Social Union in Bavaria), Grüne (the Greens), FDP (Free Democratic Party), and AfD (Alternative for Germany). Besides four times for the SPD and once for the CDU, there was never more than one politician by a single party invited in one episode. This differs when it comes to other participants, e.g., there are quite frequently more than one journalist or more than one academic in a discussion present. The other guests I have coded for, but which do not form an important part of the analysis at this point are: 202 journalists, 104 academics, 48 foreign politicians, 72 civil society actors, 23 trade unionists, 41 guests from the private sector, and 62 laypersons. A layperson is a member of society who is only invited due to their own personal characteristics or events that they are part of, like having seen a terror attack first hand. In one case, a Monika B. is invited, and her description reads: "*wears a Niqab*" (HAF311). I also want to highlight the make-up of trade union participants. This is because it speaks to the general argument developed below where political talk shows put a strong emphasis on topics around internal security but debates on the economy or the labour market are conspicuously absent. Out of the 23 trade unionists, only two represent a trade union located within the sphere of the economy, namely *ver.di* (United Services Trade Union), while the other 21 guests represent mainly the trade union of the police and other civil servant professions. Lastly, *hart aber fair* sometimes has a single discussant sitting with the audience and getting interviewed at one point, but as these actors are not present in the panel discussion, can't interject or make themselves heard, I do not code for them.

[155] Source: Der Bundeswahlleiter (2013).

[156] Source: Der Bundeswahlleiter (2017).

H2: If those topics close to the agenda of the far-right like refugees, integration, Islam, or terrorism figure amongst the most prominently discussed topics, the population will become concerned with these topics as well.

Table 6.3 Talk show topics ordered by number of episodes

1. International Politics (47)	12. Immigration (8)
2. Refugees (46)	13. Ethics and Law (8)
3. German Politics (41)	14. Violence-Germany (6)
4. Integration and Islam (23)	15. Pensions (5)
5. Violence-Terrorism (20)	16. Violence-Right (5)
6. Right-Wing Populism (16)	17. Year-Recap (3)
7. Poverty and Inequality (13)	18. Sports (2)
8. EU Politics (13)	19. Work-and-Unemployment (2)
9. War and Fighting Abroad (11)	20. Environment (1)
10. Health and Care (10)	21. Violence-Left (1)
11. Economy and Taxation (10)	22. Education (0)

Table 6.3 presents an overview of the different topic categories that I have coded for.[157] The only category requiring explanation is probably “German Politics”, by which I don’t mean a certain political field like interior politics. Instead, talk shows with that code largely revolve around election outlooks and -results, coalition negotiations or -crises, on a specific politician who might be involved in a scandal and so on. Because such a large number of topics are difficult to make sense of and show graphically, I have aggregated similar topics into larger categories in Figure 6.1. There, “Far-Right Topics” are made up out of “Refugees”, “Integration and Islam”, Violence-Terrorism”, “Right-Wing Populism”,[158] “Immigration”, “Violence-Right”, and “Violence-Germany”. “War

[157] The topic of education which was not coded for since it was never discussed but got added as an interesting absence

[158] I included “Right-Wing Populism” in the sub-set of “Far-Right Topics” as in these talk shows a supposed threat of nationalist or populist elements for German democracy or the EU as a whole is often discussed. These types of talk shows enable the far-right to play the victim, where they claim they are still a democratic party but bedevilled by the other parties. We could compare this to a situation where Donald Trump or one of his associates is invited to a talk show about the storming of the Capitol in early 2021. There, lies about the stolen election, how the demonstrators are good people, and how Antifa is also violent would probably be repeated often and hence provide an excellent opportunity to showcase their viewpoints.

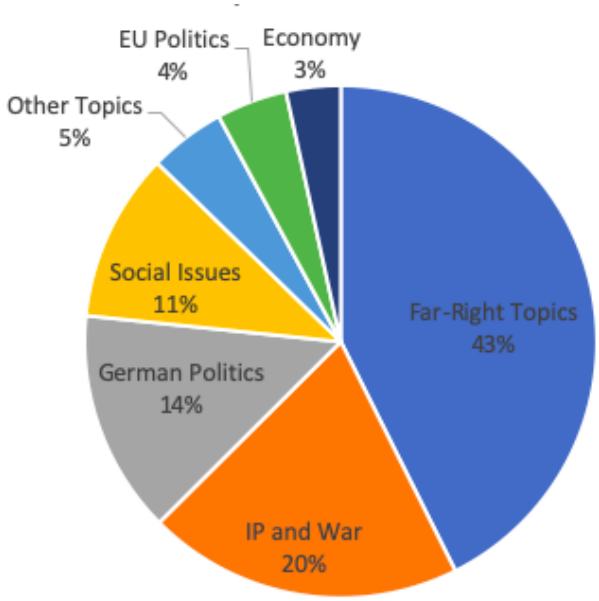
and Fighting Abroad" (mainly episodes on the Syrian civil war and the actors therein) joined "International Politics" into a single category and I created a catch-all category from the diverse and for the chapter rather insignificant topics of "Ethics and Law", "Sports", "Violence-Left", and the broad "Year-Recap" shows. Finally, all social issues were put together including "Environment".

What this overview shows is that while the producers defend their topic choices often with the argument that this is *what the public is concerned about*, this is not reflected in reality. As opinion polls ahead of the 2017 election indicate, seven out of the top nine concerns revolve around "Social Issues" as I defined them. The top concern was even School- and Education Policy which didn't receive a single episode in over two years! The rest of the list reads the following: 2) Fighting Terrorism 3) Solid Coverage with Age, 4) Fighting Criminality 5) Appropriate Wages, 6) Minimising Differences Between Rich and Poor, 7) Environment and Climate Protection, 8) Health Policy, 9) Family Policy (infratest dimap 2017, 6). We shouldn't take this one opinion poll and its specific ranking too seriously, yet it clearly shows how important social issues are for vote choices.

Interestingly, from October 2015 till March 2017 not a single episode discussed climate change, even though the Paris Climate Agreement occurred during that time. This is very surprising given how it should suit nicely their advertisement strategies: "Do we still have time to save the planet?" sounds like a prototypical talk show title. Another glaring topic that was arousing the public during that time frame and largely disregarded by talk shows were the revelations that *Volkswagen* manipulated software in cars to pretend to conform to environmental standards. It follows, that the logic of sensationalism is not the only one at work when it comes to topic selection and that

broader power relations are at play, e.g., political or economic vested interests, though to specify this more generally is beyond this thesis.

Figure 6.1 Topic distribution cumulated



We can not only see that topics important to the public were rarely discussed but also that that the colloquially voiced concerns around the dominance of far-right topics in political talk shows is confirmed. Almost every second episode over a more than two-year sample revolves around topics the far-right is campaigning on. We should also keep in mind, again, that media consumers consider the television as the media source with the greatest authenticity and credibility. In that vein, we can argue that if multiple talk shows each week cover the supposed threat of immigrants to the nation and the "failures" of integration, then these topics stick with the population. Our thought here is that from a talk show consumer's perspective, if a topic was not one of the major issues occupying current politics, then it would not be discussed as often. But because they are, then it must be the case that there is a "problem" with refugees and terrorism. As discussed, this interpretation is in line with agenda-setting theories. But to drive the

point home more clearly, we will also later look at the sentiment with which talk show episodes of different topic categories are presented by the producers. But first we have to play closer attention to only those talk shows in which the far-right takes part in the discussion.

RQ3: To discussions of which topics is the far-right getting invited?
H3: If the far-right is mainly invited to discussions on their bread-and-butter topics, then they are able to give legitimacy to and propagate their worldview easily in front of an audience of millions yet rarely have to provide opinions on other crucial issues like pensions, the economy and taxes, or poverty and inequality.

Figure 6.2 shows the topics discussed for the 34 episodes to which the far-right sent a representative. While on the first view it seems like they had to argue about a whole range of different topics, on closer inspection there are strong synergies between the topics. As above, I have grouped together into the same sub-set the “Far-Right Topics”, which then left only “German Politics”, “IP Trump”, “IP Other”, and “EU Other” as the other (non-far-right) topics the far-right discussed within the two years. For a better visualisation, Figure 6.3 shows this in a binary fashion.

Figure 6.2 Topics with far-right participation

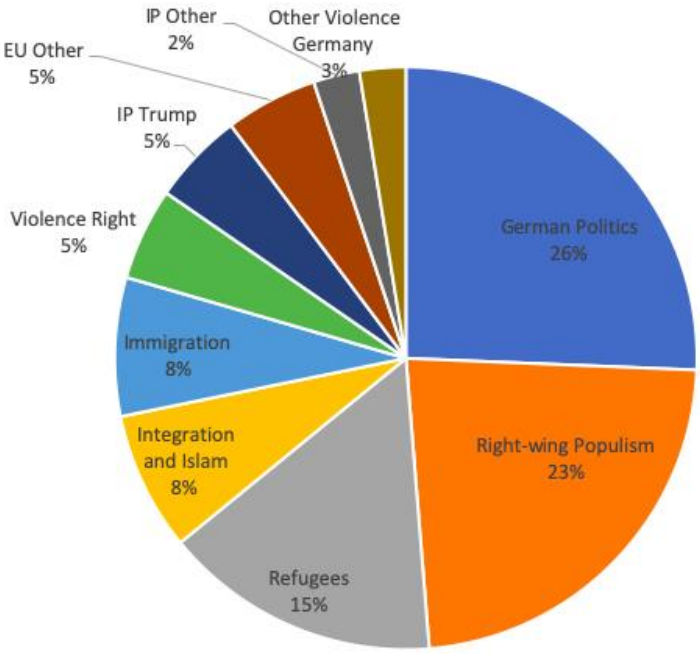
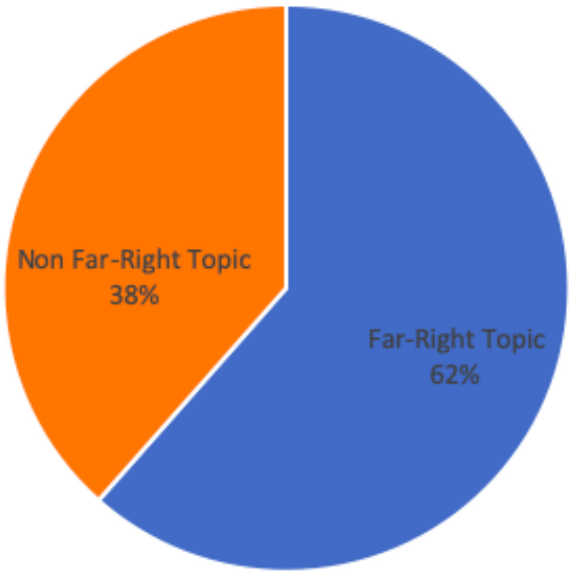


Figure 6.3 Topics with far-right participation binary



On the face of it, the distribution of invitations per topic seems varied. After all, the AfD is getting invited to many debates that I have coded as “German Politics” - 10 in total - so they will probably have to provide opinions on a diverse set of topics. However, the

analysis revealed that all of the debates on “German Politics” in which the AfD participated also have a strong hue towards topics close to the far-right.[159] The following is, therefore, not a critique that in debates on “German Politics” in 2015-2017, issues like migration policy play a large role – this is to be expected, it was an important issue for many people – yet it is also not the case that the AfD was ever forced outside their comfort zone.

To break down the 15 episodes on non-far-right topics yet with their participation, I want to give the example of three debates coded as “German Politics” because they strongly referred to a certain Sunday in May 2016 where three state elections took place: one was titled “*The Election of Direction* [*Richtungswahl*]– *The Reckoning of Merkel’s Refugee Policy?*“ (AW332),[160] another “*The Anger Election – Is Germany losing the political centre?*” (HAF295) and the third had as a part of its title “*… Merkel’s election of destiny*”, with the description including: *“…for the first time the citizens in the federal states have the opportunity to vote on Merkel’s refugee policy…*” (M483). Those episodes were all aired within five days apart, from 09/03/16 till 14/03/16. I could continue with giving examples of the other episodes coded as “German Politics” and have a member of AfD as discussant, they are all formulated in a similar vein. Yet also the remaining five episodes on International Politics and the EU also have a very strong nationalist slant and are all focussed on Trump, Erdogan, Putin, or Brexit. Dramatization is high again: “*is the EU done after refugee quarrel and Brexit?*” (HAF336).

[159] One could think about whether a re-coding is necessary when topics around “German Politics” to a large degree revolve around immigration and similar issues. The reason for not doing that is that I wanted to safeguard myself against accusations to code every single talk show that has a little bit of discussion of far-right topics as a “far-right” talk show. Hence, only when the main focus of the show was on a “far-right” topic I have coded it as such.

[160] In NVivo, I have categorised the single episodes with an acronym for each talk show and the official number of the episode. AW is “Anne Will”, HAF is “*hart aber fair*”, M is “Maischberger”, and MI “Maybrit Illner”.

In short, either the far-right gets invited to a topic that is very close to their bread-and-butter issues or even when the topic is more general it still touches on many aspects regarding societies "in turmoil". All episodes are strongly framed towards division, uncertainty, and polarisation. **This applies to every single one of the 34 talk shows the far-right participated in from the summer of 2015 until the fall of 2017**. Such a sense of crisis and the immediate necessity of a saviour is important for the far-right to secure their legitimacy and necessity as a political actor. These kinds of framing, therefore, strongly play into the hands of the far-right – as the then official spokesman ascertained in a set-up interview that was part of a documentary: *the worse condition Germany is in, the better for AfD*.[161]

Here, the analysis hits a limit of course, because we can't establish a counter-factual. It could be the case, on the one hand, that the talk show producers actually do invite the far-right to many diverse topics, but the AfD simply declines to send a representative. This would make the "debt" I am ascribing to political talk shows in making far-right viewpoints socially acceptable certainly smaller. But, on the other hand, the producers could also publicly defend themselves against this allegation and state openly how often they have invited the AfD to discussion on, say, the "Economy and Taxation" and the AfD declined to show up. But to my knowledge this hasn't been brought up by the producers, so I am comfortable in arguing that there is a strong tendency to only invite the far-right to the topics close to them. Or to more general topics, which are nevertheless framed towards a far-right outlook involving crisis, danger, and social breakdown. Yet, as we established, the far-right was only present in a bit over every tenth talk show episode. We now approach the most important

[161] Christian Lüth, who was a part of AfD from its beginning, has since been dismissed of his duties as it transpired that he had referred to himself as a fascist (see die Zeit 2020).

question of the analysis: with which sentiment are the different topic categories framed by the talk show producers?

RQ4: Sensationalism and tabloidization are widespread in political talk shows but are episodes on the topics close to the far-right framed in an especially dramatic way?
H4: If talk shows on the topics close to the far-right are more often framed in terms of threats and negative consequences, then the viewers will take on this negative slant. It also enables the far-right's viewpoints to appear more plausible, as the mental step from sensationalist talk show framing to alarming far-right rhetoric is getting increasingly smaller.

RQ4 is the research question I am most interested in and which I expect to provide the most explanatory power. I code the sentiment of talk show titles according to the categories positive, neutral, negative, or both positive and negative. As is common practice when analysing newspaper headlines where also the lead-in is taken into account, I will also use for my coding choices the short descriptions provided by the producers for TV programme guides and the broadcasters' own websites. These intros are very relevant for the overall framing of the debate as they are read out by the moderator at the beginning of an episode word for word or only altered slightly. In other words, used to kick-off and provide the general terms of the debate.

An example for a positively worded talk show would be "Bring in foreigners: are immigrants saving our labour market?" (Maischberger, 01/06/2016), a neutral one "Coming to stay: how to make Germans out of immigrants?" (hart aber fair, 18/04/2016) and a negative one "Social state under pressure: are refugees too expensive for us?" (Maischberger, 17/02/2016). With these examples I want to emphasise that I will only

code clear-cut cases as “negative” to not invite criticisms that I over-coded on this important variable. While I, personally, think that expecting to make Germans out of immigrants is a tendentious standpoint, this title does not emphasise a sense of threat or immediacy and there are no strong words present such as “wrath” or “debacle”. Similarly, I myself consider it positive when refugees are invited to a talk show so that they can talk for themselves, yet M473 “The hour of refugees: now we talk” is not framed positively *per se*. This is consistent with my coding strategy for the episode topics, where I coded the episode on “*The Election of Direction* [*Richtungswahl*]– *The Reckoning of Merkel’s Refugee Policy?*“ (AW332)” as “German Politics” and not “Refugees”.

Figure 6.4 Total distribution of sentiment in episodes

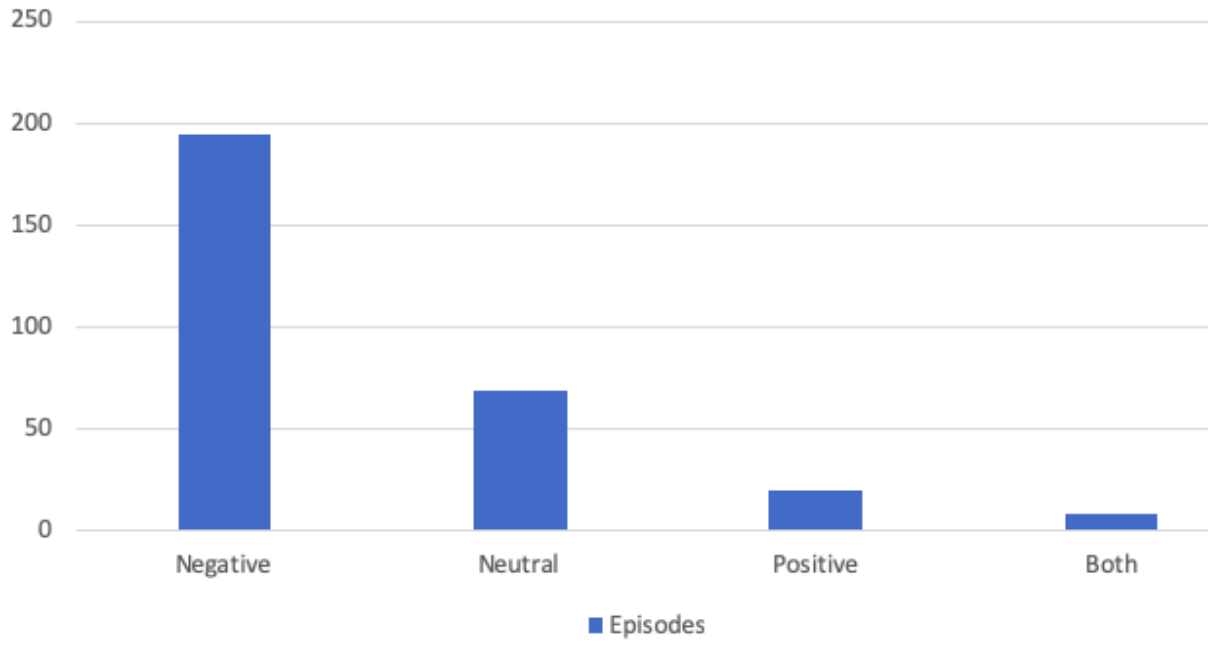
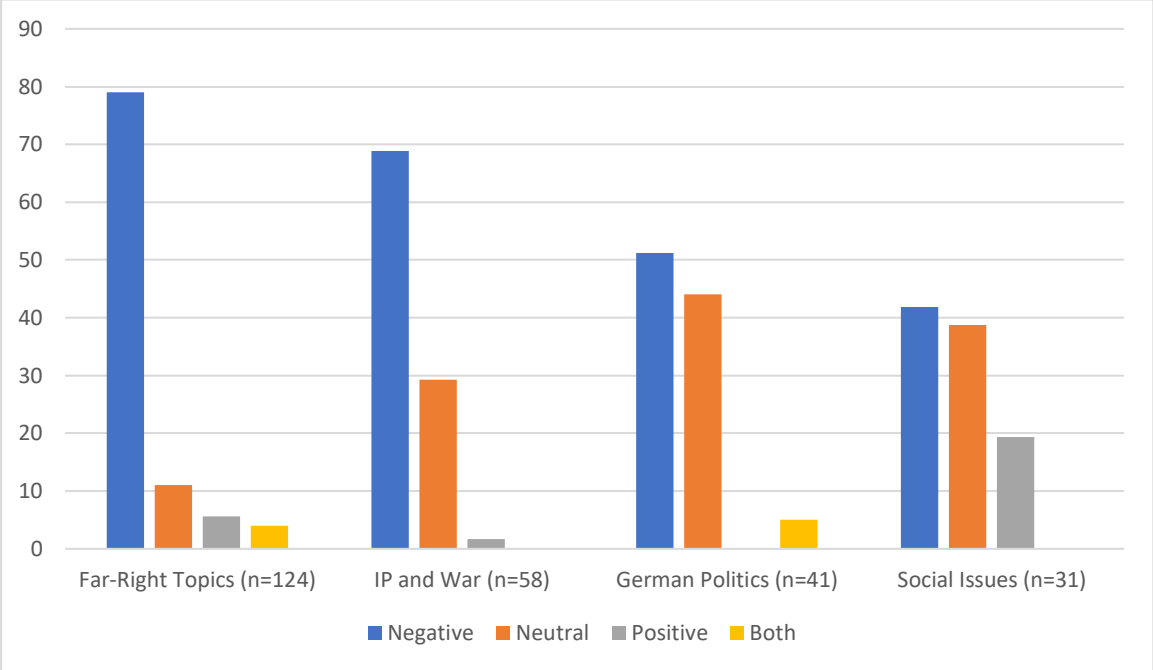


Figure 6.4 gives an overview of the overall sentiment distribution in the 291 talk show episodes. We can see that a negative slant is very common, with around two thirds of all talk shows framed in especially gloomy or harsh terms. Even if there are a couple of episodes where subjective coding decisions could have gone another way, the

tendency seems to be clear cut.[162] While there are a chunk of neutrally advertised talk shows, there are almost none indicating a positive framing, like the way a community (however defined, though often as the “people”, the “population”) could benefit from a state of affairs (like rich bankers not avoiding paying taxes). This was to be expected given the often colloquially voiced critique and is also understandable to an extent regarding advertising strategies by the broadcasters to maximise viewership. What is more interesting is the distribution of framing per topic category.

Figure 6.5 Sentiment distribution per topic category in percent



With help of Figure 6.5 we can see now more clearly that there is indeed a very strong tendency towards negative framing of “Far-Right Topics”, with just under 80 percent of those episodes being negatively framed. When it comes to “IP and War” we find still a

[162] This is also why I have decided, in conversation with scholars more experience in content analysis than me, against using an inter-coder reliability measure. Even if there should be a small disparity where another coder would have chosen a different option, this wouldn’t tip the scale in a large way. Instead, I will, for the maximum amount of transparency, make the data I used available upon request (text will be in German). I thank Lea Sgier, the instructor of the Essex Summer School course on the qualitative analysis of text and talk for her time and comments.

high percentage of negative framings. Since wars are inherently dangerous and often there is a heightened sense of immediacy necessary to avoid even worse conditions, this is understandable. But there are also way more episodes framed neutrally already. While for “IP and War” roughly 30 percent of episodes are framed neutrally, the number drops with “Far-Right Topics” to 10 percent.

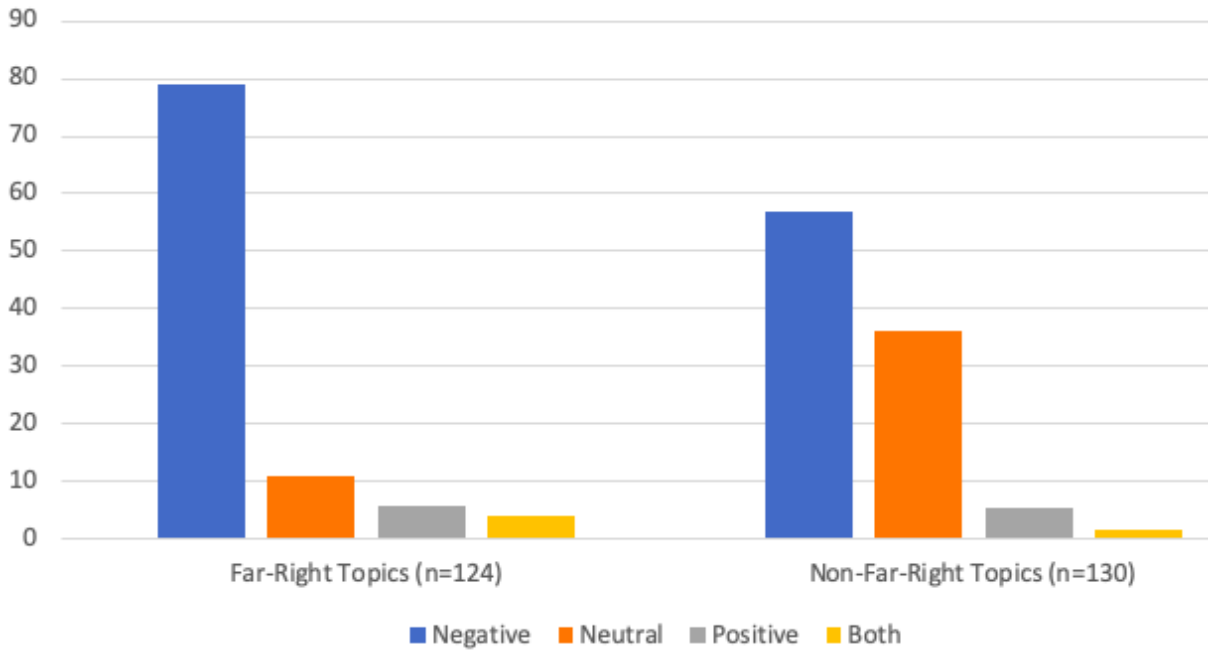
Taking the next two biggest categories into account, the picture changes completely and the distribution of negative and neutral frames start to converge in “German Politics” and are almost even when it comes to “Social Issue” episodes. What is further interesting is that “Social Issues” is the only category where a substantive number of positively framed episodes exist. Therefore, there is clear evidence for the colloquially voiced opinion that if talk show producers were to dedicate more episodes to the latter category, there would be less grounds for critique towards sensationalism and a dooms-day mood as formulated by the German Cultural Council, for example, and they would be more in line to cover those topic that the public care about.

However, this imbalance in the way the producers advertise and introduce the topics becomes even more glaring if we merge the three categories of “IP and War”, “German Politics”, and “Social Issues” into a single one and then compare the framing strategies to those with the “Far-Right Topics”. That way also the total number of episodes becomes almost equal with 130 of the former and 124 of the latter, so that single categories become less of an outlier like “German Politics” was above.

Based on the data in Figure 6.6 we can see the imbalance I have been describing now most clearly. The percentage of negatively framed “Far-Right Topics” remains unchanged with just under 80 percent but the newly created category shows that from all other topics, just under 60 percent of them are. What is more, now the neutral category of “Non-Far Right Topics” is way more prominent and the framing

strategies therefore way more balanced than they are with the “Far-Right Topics”. We can find an imbalance of around 3.5:1.; for every neutrally framed “Far-Right” talk show there are 3.5 neural “non-Far-Right” episodes.

Figure 6.6 Sentiment far-right vs three non-far-right topics



Therefore, hypothesis four holds true. It stated that while sensationalism and dramatization are generally widespread in political talk shows, the situation is especially worrisome when it comes to topics that are close to the far-right. I say worrisome because recent social-neuroscientific research suggests that negativity, for reasons we still don’t entirely understand, seems to influence individuals to a greater extent than positivity does, especially in socio-political life. It is a stronger driving force when it comes to decision-making in the political field than positivity and brain imaging technologies have shown stronger activations when individuals produce negative evaluations on an election candidate than when positive ones prevail (Spezio et al. 2008). Further, as I mentioned above, second-level agenda setting in Communication

Studies also point towards negativity “gripping” subjects stronger, as countries who were described negatively over a period of time in newspapers were vividly remembered by readers as negative, while for those countries that received positive coverage there was no accompanying positive view within the readers to be found (Wanta, Golan, and Lee 2004).

Lastly, another criticism that is sometimes made is that the far-right doesn’t even need to be invited for a discussion to take place on the far-right’s terrain. It would be significant, if sensational and doomsday shows where the discussion is framed within far-right terms had less far-right participation, while they then capture formally neutrally framed episodes in which they are present with their rhetoric anyways. However, the data does not allow us to make a statement one way or another. The distribution of sentiment in talk shows where the far-right participates is very similar to where it does not participate. The numbers are 62 percent with far-right participant and 66 percent without for negatively framed shows, 26 percent / 23 percent for neutral shows and 9 percent / 1 percent for positive ones. The 9 percent of positively framed debates with far-right participation is quite far away from the 1 percent without, but the total sample of positively framed talk shows is so small (20) that the participation in them by the far-right (3) can very well be an outlier. In this case, there is no argument to be made one way or another.

6.11 Conclusion

Overall, my analysis in this chapter confirms many of the critiques voiced in the public sphere about the state of political talk shows. At least in the time period under consideration here, I found a strong dominance of episodes discussing topics close to

the agenda of the far-right like refugees, terrorism, or integration. At the same time talk show producers see their role uncritically when putting these topics into the spotlight and thereby mainstreaming them; refusing to acknowledge their strong agenda setting powers. But they also claim to purposively pick those issues for debate which the public supposedly cares about. Yet this isn't even true as many of the social issues which drive vote choice are very rarely discussed.

To a certain extent, the discussion of migration related topics is not concerning in and for themselves. Of course, it was a topic that the public cared about. What is concerning, however, is the constant framing of questions like "how much does the refugee wave cost us" and "how many more can this country take in" instead of neutrally or positively framed episodes (O. Weber 2019, 61). My data shows this, for the first time, unequivocally. Almost 4 out of every 5 episodes on topics close to the far-right were framed in an especially dramatic or threatening way, as opposed to non-far right topics where the number was around half. Similarly, only 1 in 10 episodes in the former category are framed in a neutral way while 1 out of 3 are for the latter. This is worrisome because the television is seen by consumers as the media with the highest degree of authenticity – what is said on the television is taken for the truth. In this way televised political talk shows take part in the construction of political identities by pointing out what's right and wrong with society. I conjecture that if political talk shows discuss a certain topic over and over, this articulates for the consumer that there must be something wrong with it, otherwise they wouldn't discuss it so often.

Yet it also has to be pointed out that, especially regarding hypothesis four, I cannot "prove" the concrete effects these framings have for individuals but merely conjecture what is the case. Those are the limits of my argument when it comes to concrete measurements, which are lacking. However, I have good reason to believe,

following the discussion on media effects and their influences on viewers above, that media content like talk shows can make far-right viewpoints more acceptable. Through the constant repeating of the far-right's problem diagnoses and solutions on public television, week-in and week-out in front of millions of viewers for over two years, their ways of seeing the world become mainstreamed. This is happening in clear distinction to the conditions during which far-right parties in Germany's past had to operate; they were actively excluded from media space back then as a conscious choice by media executives. And if they were not in a few exceptional cases, there was a strong backlash. Nowadays, this inhibition does not exist anymore at all.

Of course, we can't simply take the developments within the talk show genre described above as *the* reason why the far-right established itself as a legitimate political actor in Germany. I have pointed out in the thesis at different times that we need to read all chapters together in order to answer my research question and not take an insight from a single chapter to account for the whole phenomenon by itself. This overarching argument will be once more fully fleshed out in the conclusion and complemented by alternative explanations, future avenues of research, and limitations to my overall argument.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Explaining the Rise of the Far-Right Through Mainstreaming Processes

While I was writing this conclusion, national elections took place in Sweden. One of the oldest far-right parties in Europe, the Sweden Democrats, gained a small majority with their right-wing alliance and will most likely form the government. The Guardian summarised the mood after election day in the following way: 'Sweden's political mainstream contemplated the apparent failure of their strategy to adopt the Sweden Democrats' (SD) positions on crime and immigration in an attempt to win back voters from the far right' (the Guardian 2022). I will turn to the generalisability of my argument in a moment but contend now that misguided "mainstreaming" tactics are alive and kicking and pose a danger for our societies, especially minorities. That is why this thesis was needed: to better explain the puzzling phenomenon of far-right support but also to formulate lessons and recommendations on how to deal with the far-right in the future from a more informed viewpoint.

A period of reflection also took place in Germany following the rise of the AfD, which began its life as a euro-critical, liberal-conservative party but later increasingly radicalised towards the far-right fringe. It got voted into the national parliament in a norm-breaking election in 2017 and continued to increase its vote shares continuously, especially in sub-national elections in 2019. This was also the timeframe this thesis looked at, trying to understand how "German exceptionalism" – its historical lack of far-right support since the Second World War – broke down. In other words, how the far-right changed its face from a ridiculed actor on the political fringe to a legitimate political actor in the eyes of many voters. I have shown in this thesis that in the years during

which the AfD was in the ascendant, the mainstream political parties – at times even parties on the left side of the spectrum – came dangerously close to the rhetoric of the AfD. Markus Söder, the chairman of the Bavarian sister party of the CDU, the CSU, was especially guilty of that. For example, he demanded in a Tweet on 14 June 2018 the end of what he called "*asylum tourism*".[163]

Such rhetoric strongly resembles the claims made by far-right parties in the 1990s, but while they were rightfully considered outrageous then, by now claims like this have made their way into the political centre. Eventually, by 2020, Söder has even acknowledged the fact himself, as he admitted that making such articulations was a '*grave mistake*' and has helped the rise of the AfD. He conceded that '*back then we had the wrong strategy. We have acted wrongly (…), have thought: can you fight the phenomenon that is AfD by taking on their issue?*' (n-tv 2020).[164] To show this process empirically and with a discourse-theoretical foundation was the guiding motivation of this thesis.

I achieved this with reference to the process of the "construction of political identities". As opposed to previous research on the far-right, I claimed that individuals' perception of social and political reality and what one counts as "facts" or "common sense" is not fixed but instead fluid and changeable. I argued that we can trace the emergence of "problems" from their parochial beginnings by paying attention to elite articulations and show how some "problems" gain in importance while others fall. Importantly, this can be done without falling back to an essentialised notion of identity, as in "globalization produces an identity crisis", "economic values happened to get replaced by cultural values" or "the far-right taps into unsatisfied demands".

[163] The whole Tweet reads in translation: '*We finally need to secure our borders effectively. To that belongs of course refoulement. The asylum tourism has to be stopped. Germany can't wait endlessly for Europe but has to act autonomously*'.
[164] In this thesis, full italicised quotes indicate my translation from the German to English.

Overall, I have made two main contributions: an empirical one and a theoretical one. My empirical contribution was to provide a satisfactory answer to the puzzling phenomenon that is the recent and lightning-quick far-right success in Germany. I argued that we need to understand the process how the far-right moved from outcast to electorally viable choice via mainstreaming processes that have closed the gap between what were formerly considered extreme, "far-right" viewpoints, problem diagnoses, and solutions to "mainstream", or "acceptable" ones. This occurred - unlike in other countries where the mainstreaming framework was applied to like the US, UK, or France (Mondon and Winter 2020) - even before a far-right party was present in the political arena. In Chapter 4, I provided evidence for this by discussing the reversals and U-turns in the integration debate. During two dislocatory moments, the controversy around the publication of the book "*Deutschland schafft sich ab*" (Sarrazin 2010) and the moral panic following the violent night of New Year's Eve 2015/16 in Cologne (Goeßmann 2019), elite actors argued in favour of an exclusionary and essentialising conception of (Muslim) immigrants from which the far-right later benefitted in their identity constructions. While members of all parties had at one point or another called for a *Leitkultur* ("leading culture"), only the AfD then took on the issue in their election campaign in 2017.

I explicated the ease with which far-right claims *could* be accepted with reference to the discourse-theoretical concept of the horizon, which leads me to my theoretical contribution. While I considered Ernesto Laclau's and the Essex School's writings more generally on the conditions of possibility of social change very helpful, I discerned some anomalies within Laclau's conceptualisation of the "demand". This was surprising because he considers demands as the minimal unit of analysis for political identities (Laclau 2005a, 73, 2005b, 35). But in his description of how demands

emerge, I found some remnants of essentialism or formalism present as they appeared to follow logically from concrete social circumstances – a view discourse-theory rejects. I inquired about the emergence of demands because this was critical for my puzzle of why demands made by far-right parties in the past were rejected but similar demands accepted recently. To shed light on this process, I brought the concept of the horizon into play, understood as a privileged space where demands struggle for meaning, are negotiated, and either understood or not (Laclau 1990, 64; Norval 2012, 812). Chapters 4 and 5 have then shown via two examples, in the fields of the integration of foreigners and immigrant criminality, how that horizon was advantageously prepared by mainstream politicians and the media for far-right claims.

The attention for immigrant criminality was warranted because while the AfD is usually considered as an anti-immigration party, I argued we should rather consider it a party championing “internal security”. I contend that that their extreme statements, like the government having lost the monopoly on violence, can only *make sense* due to prior elite articulations that constantly referred to the “problem” of immigrant crime. But this happened in a way that misrepresents how their own police crime statistics work and what parts of *reality* they actually can account for. For example, that they cannot make comparisons between the crime rates of Germans or “immigrants” because the overall number of the latter in the country is not known or because the definition of “immigrant” changed at a crucial time.

Chapter 6 then zoomed into one media genre in particular that hasn’t received the attention it deserves – televised political talk show that are watched almost daily by millions of people. There, I showed how in these talk shows far-right viewpoints were mainstreamed during a period of over two years. This marks the first empirical analysis on the topic over time that confirmed public commentator’s hunch that

televised political-talk shows are biased towards far-right problem definitions. I concluded that the opportunity for the AfD to appear regularly on the television screens and the constant repeating of their problem diagnoses in the talk show episodes made far-right identifications more likely.

Taking these insights together provides, I claim, a better explanation for why the far-right became electorally relevant than those put forward previously. Like those which explain far-right support through authoritarian leanings following childhood or adolescent experiences (Adorno et al. 2019; Crepaz 2020), through “losers of globalization” which easily fall prey to the far-right (Betz 1993; Minkenberg 2000; Butterwegge, Hentges, and Wiegel 2018), through having backlashed against modernisation and its progress in racial and sexual matters (Ignazi 1992; Inglehart and Norris 2016; Nachtwey 2017; Heitmeyer 2018), or through institutional factors like voting systems (Kitschelt 1995; Norris 2005).

7.2 Limitations and Future Avenues of Research

One glaring limitation of my project is that I did not provide the means to differentiate in the analysis between mainstreaming effects in Eastern versus Western Germany. Historically (though there are exceptions) as well as currently, the far-right is more successful in Eastern Germany. While there are many explanations out there, I find them often unsatisfactory – pointing to the complexity of the phenomenon. I discern many shortcomings in the literature on the East/West divide that are similar to far-right studies as a whole, like a lack of constructivist insights or wrongly taking identifications for granted and fixed. For example, Pesthy et al. (2021, 72) claim probably correctly that ‘we find that individuals living in eastern Germany, older people in particular, are

somewhat more populist and nativist than those in western Germany. Second, populist and nativist sentiments increase the likelihood of an AfD vote in both parts of the country'. Never mind the inconsistencies in calling some people more "populist" than others, but the crucial question unanswered is *why* people in the East are more nativist or form whom nativism is more important for one's vote choice (see also Arzheimer forthcoming).

Similarly, there is the curious and unanswered paradox of why, when not many immigrants live in the East, this lack of intercultural contact leads to increased perceptions of cultural threats. This is simply taken for granted (see Pesthy, Mader, and Schoen 2021, 75–76) and not analysed specifically. Yet, my research has pointed out avenues to explore this, such as through affective investments into "The Nation Thing" but more contextual work on the micro-level of identifications is needed. I contend that such insights can only be produced through either more (1) micro-sociological or (2) ethnographic studies; fields that are rather distant from my own expertise. In any case, research is needed that is motivated by hermeneutic insights, taking into account contextualised self-interpretations (Glynos and Howarth 2007, chapter 2) and moves away from research on attitudes via public opinion surveys. With only these we will never get to the bottom of things and *why* people identify the way they identify.

Regarding the former, studies that mix historiography and hermeneutic accounts of particular individuals, like Steffan Mau's (2019) work on the small town Lütten Klein seem promising. He analyses how re-unification and de-industrialisation of the East have shaped the lives of people in a few high-rise apartment blocks (Weisskircher 2020, 617). Or, in the vein of the latter, Rebecca Pates and Julia Leser (2021) recent project stands out. They focus the rewilding of nature in Eastern

Germany and the return of wolves to their natural habitats. They then analyse how the fears regarding the dangers of wolves and migrants are constructed in an equivalential chain in small contexts, while also being aware of the results of the traumatic dissolution of the GDR. This relates especially to the loss of communal bonds which figured strongly and were actively supported by the state in communist Germany (Heitmeyer 2018, 81) on which ethnographic-, social movement- and research on commons has a lot of purchase. Lastly, it could be shown that in some smaller settlements in Eastern Germany specifically, there is indeed something like an "authoritarian" upbringing taking place, where vast numbers of inhabitants of villages are socialised within racist and fascist social structures.[165] This is the one exception I highlighted when I to a large degree dismissed socio-psychological accounts of far-right support in the literature review.

Another limitation of this thesis is that I haven't proved a causal link between the consumption of media, a change of political attitudes, and the subsequent rise of the far-right. Here as well some more contextual research, e.g., via experiments would be needed for one to be able to formulate concrete claims on the strength of media effects, which are probably different for different people. I have provided good reasons for why we should understand the media as a major factor in constructing social reality, such as through its first and second level agenda setting powers, the way it offers "preferred readings", or that negative coverage seems to "grip" subjects stronger than a positive one. But there is also an alternative explanation. Namely, the theory of motivated reasoning suggests that many people consume information which is congruent to their beliefs (Iyengar and Hahn 2009). In that vein, one could argue that

[165] For the description of one such place, Jamel, see Richter (2018, chapter 4), who considers it as part of a "state- and democracy-free" area in the very de-populated parts of Eastern Germany. There are not too many places in Germany where you could put up a way marker that tells you that you are 855 kilometres away from Brunnau am Inn, the birthplace of Adolf Hitler.

the media debates I took into view may reinforce opinions and ideals but do not change them (see Slothuus and de Vreese 2010).

Additionally, I have only taken national media outlets into account, whether print or television, and there is a definite lack of research on the influence of local media. The impact of private and tabloid media for the far-right is relatively well researched (see Mazzoleni, Stewart, and Horsfield 2003) and I have provided evidence that even the public media increasingly utilises logics of sensationalism and dramatization. But when it comes to local media the picture is still blurry. However, local journalism might be an especially trustful source of information for many people, giving local editors and guest writers grand powers to interpellate their readers. Further, given the dire financial state many local media outlets are in, there is good reason to believe that they would easily give access to writers providing content free of charge, e.g., through op-eds, which could be utilised strategically by the far-right.

Another question I couldn't tackle is precisely why mainstream parties started to mainstream. I suspect they did so at the beginning to win over new voters and this path later lead to the failed strategy of beating the far-right in their own game. But a more detailed analysis of this process is needed. The same holds true about why the media stopped its silent consensus to not cover the far-right. Interviews with media actors who experienced this process themselves and the debates that must have occurred in meeting rooms are mandatory to shed light on this crucial question.

Finally, while I have pointed at various points to examples that show how, in my opinion, the mainstream in Germany engaged in neo-racist (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991) or colour-blind racist (Bonilla-Silva 1997, 2018) rhetoric and practices, I have not theorised race and racialisation as such in-depth. This is an important part of far-right studies moving forward that is as yet not sufficiently done (one refreshing exception is

Mondon 2022a) but necessary to (1) call them by their name, (2) better understand the often veiled and implicit forms of contemporary racism which (3) otherwise exonerate the mainstream whose racism might go undetected with only the far-right being “racist”.

7.3 Alternative Explanations and Routes Untaken

I now turn to some examples I didn’t use in the thesis but could have drawn on to reach similar conclusions. With this I want to show the validity of my approach and that I am not too dependent on singular examples. It might also help some readers to apply the framework to other cases before I move to the issue of generalizability in the next section.

First, while not having had the impact of a dislocation, one episode in the spring of 2018 shows well how a moral panic can mainstream far-right ideas. Two aspects are at stake here, the affective constructions of a threatening, foreign other, like during the moral panic following the New Year’s Eve in Cologne (chapter 4) and the power and fantasy of numbers (chapter 5). This was the highly mediatized “Asylum Scandal”, supposedly perpetrated by the Bremen branch of the Ministry for Migration and Refugees (*Bundesamt für Migration und* Flüchtlinge - BAMF). The “scandal” that shook domestic politics for weeks was that this particular branch, driven by the personal pity of its head, supposedly lured refugees “by the busload” to Bremen to file their asylum application there. Resulting in “thousands” of “illegitimate” and “undeserving” refugees having been granted asylum (ProAsyl 2020). In its wake, not only the Bremen head of the BAMF had to resign, but also the BAMF Federal Minister. Fears emerged across the political spectrum of how many more illegitimate asylum decisions had been made elsewhere. Even the head of the *Left* party (“die Linke”) was quick to point out that this

'*is clearly about organized crime and serious fraud'* (Berliner Morgenpost 2018). To rectify the "damage" and to weed out the "false" refugees, the largest-ever group of investigators was put together in Bremen's criminal history and the official charge was '*clan-like misguidance to faulty asylum applications in 1.200 cases*' (ProAsyl 2020).

However, after a year-long investigation, only 121 out of the original 1.200 cases were deemed to be potentially faulty. In November 2020, all charges were dropped altogether, and it emerged that the ratio of faulty refugee claims given out in Bremen as a whole was below the federal average (die Zeit 2019). This episode shows both the "theft of enjoyment" supposedly committed by the head of BAMF Bremen who risked the health of the nation for her personal beliefs and the "horrific dimension of fantasy", invoking the fear of "what if there are thousands of other false refugees in the country". But, if laid out in more details, it could also show how the "horizon" has shifted and mainstream political actors take conspiracy-like stances and dream up an imagined threat "from within". This serves to solidify identifications with the demands put forward by the far-right and the scandalized media-event nature of the episode ties subjects affectively to the far-right political project.

Second, at the beginning of the chapter I have already quoted the head of the CSU, Andreas Söder, who admitted that the tactic of mainstreaming AfD's problems and trying to beat them in their own game helped the radical party in its ascent. This process could be analysed in more depth than I did, especially when it comes to Andreas Söder's predecessor, the aforementioned Seehofer. Especially during the so-called "migration crisis", the CSU was on the brink of bringing down the government it was a part of over the "refugee issue". It is in this light that we have to see the Interior Minister de Maizière *10 Theses on Leitkultur* and his *We are not Burka* (see chapter 4). Generally, the positions of the last three German Interior Ministers would deserve

some attention, as all of them have come close to the far-right fringe at times. Over the time period of 2009 until 2021, this would cover the appointments of de Maizière, Hans-Peter Friedrich, Horst Seehofer, and de Maizière again. Therefore, exactly the timeframe where I diagnosed the mainstreaming of far-right viewpoints. Among many examples one could use, Seehofer continuously played the far-right tune during his nomination, most famously by saying that "*the migration question is the mother of all political problems in this country. I have said that for three years. And many public opinion polls confirm this*' (rp-online 2018). As I pointed out repeatedly in the thesis, both political elites and the media continuously ignore their own powers in bringing "problems" to the attention of the general public, are oblivious of their role in constructing reality, and then defend their actions with the "fears" and "sorrows" of the population they helped create.

Lastly, I argued in the thesis that the public discourse shifted to the right even before the AfD appeared on the political scene. I did this by tracing the developments in the *Leitkultur* debate from its beginnings in the year 2000 and the different meanings attached to the term until the general election in 2017 (see chapter 4). A similar analysis could be made with regards to the term "*Migrationshintergrund*" ("migration background"). The term was invented with the micro-census of 2005 - probably with benevolent reasons - by the Federal Statistics Agency (see Will 2019). They wanted to account better for the struggles and needs of people for whom at least one parent was not born in Germany. For example, when it came to educational achievements and job prospects (see Horvath 2017). However, the term, which was intended as an inclusionary measure, acquired a new meaning and became one that upheld differences. This made it impossible for people with migrant parents to ever become "real" Germans – even in the third or fourth generation – and this resulted in an

essentialising and stigmatising form of Othering (Horvath 2017, 213). Therefore, the concept can be analysed in conjunction with the even more exclusionary and normatively charged *Leitkultur*. Eventually, a commission established by the federal government suggested to get rid of the term as it was doing more damage than good in its practical, everyday use (tagesschau 2021), but this has not taken place yet.

7.4 Generalisability of the Argument

In many ways, my argument has pointed out processes that are occurring or have occurred in many other countries as well. This relates both to the culturalisation discourse and the neo-racism (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991) prevailing in our societies but also to the refusal of media outlets to acknowledge their world-making capabilities by pretending to just report on "what is taking place".

Regarding the former, observers have noticed one communality between the rise of the far-right in European countries. In the words of Yilmaz:

> In almost every case, a debate about national values and social cohesion is opened up through a specific event **taken up first by populist far-right actors** and then by mainstream politicians in the media, whose disproportionate coverage of the populists render them central figures in the debate. The event often quickly turns into a moral panic about Islamic values or Muslim cultural practices because the preceding moral panics had already established the framework (Yılmaz 2016, 193, my emphasis).

This is certainly what happened during the moral panic after the New Year's Eve of 2015/16 in Cologne and the renewed calls for *Leitkultur* in its wake. But one major distinction is that in Germany moral panics and controversies around immigration were created by mainstream actors already when no far-right party was present yet in the political arena. One clear example is President Wulff voicing in a public speech in 2010 that Islam is a part of Germany, after which a large controversy ensued. While Interior

Minister Schäuble made the same statement four years earlier without an outcry ensuing. The AfD was at that point still three years removed from its founding and five years from its radicalisation. Otherwise, the process of mainstreaming in Germany was very similar to the one in other countries. The structures of the debate are very similar and the terms almost indistinguishable:

> In the Netherlands, the theme of national debate has been “standards and values”; in Sweden and Norway, cultural barriers to inclusion, in the UK, “community cohesion”; in France, the principle of *laïcité* (state secularism); in Germany, the primacy of the “*Leitkultur*” (leading culture); in Denmark, the “intolerant culture” among immigrants that prevents integration; in Spain, public safety and crime (Fekete 2009, 62–63).

But of course, the unique situation in Germany regards its fascist past, which is one of the reasons why this thesis was needed. Whereas scholarship provided convincing arguments why the far-right *failed* to become popular in Germany, this thesis has pointed to the power of mainstreaming processes. If even in the society in which we would think a far-right political project runs into a lot of problems in making their claims acceptable, they finally succeed with the help of elite actor and media articulations, then mainstreaming needs finally to be taken seriously as the *main explanatory variable for far-right support*.

To some extent, the East-West divide is unique to Germany, especially as it relates to the potentially dislocatory experience of having lived in two completely different economic and social systems. Yet we also find similarities to other countries when it comes to advantaged and disadvantaged communities. Be it the North/South divide in the UK or the coastal area/fly-over state divide in the US. The similarity here is that in all instances the “have-nots” have been infantilised and essentialised by elites and academics refused to take the construction of political identities into account nor acknowledged the power of affective investments into political projects.

7.5 Critique and the Road Ahead

In closing, I want to briefly reflect and critically assess how we can move forward and avoid the past mistakes I have pointed out. Regarding party political strategies, I have made it abundantly clear - and some actors like the CSU's head Söder came to the same realisation - that to beat the far-right in their own game is not going to work. It is also insufficient to simply "fact-check" the far-right as this does not take into account the strong bond of affective investments that a (small) part of society have developed towards the far-right political project. Similarly, it is not the case that European societies simply need to be more open and benevolent, like when Rosellini (2019, 129) claims that 'the future role of the extreme right will depend on the extent to which Germany can convince its European partners to make substantial contributions to solving the refugee crisis in a humane manner'. Again, this stance fails to take affective investments into political projects into account as it assumes a rational taking-over of benevolence of the people if the elites tread the path. Instead, and of course this is no easy task, new constructions of political identities are needed around a new vision, a new common-sense, if we want to overcome the current predicament in our societies.

Of course, the media is also crucial in this process. Why it has changed its reporting practices and disengaged from the silent agreement to not cover the far-right is one of the most pertinent questions still to be answered. We need new reporting practices that are ethical and do not aid the far-right in making their problem diagnoses acceptable. This is not easy as it is impossible to reconstruct the previous and hugely successful "cordon sanitaire" to totally exclude the far-right, which would allow them to easily play the victim. But the media needs to be aware of the powerful constructions they are engaging in and not hide behind the statement to report on "what the people

care about". In that vein, ethical reporting needs to trump economic interests. But for this all media outlets who by law or by conviction care about the state of society need to start this process together and agree to new standards collectively.

Contemporary scholarship also needs to come to terms with the role it has played in bringing the processes into being they are trying to explain (see also Mondon and Winter 2020). For example, Wilhelm Heitmeyer asks my research question of how the extreme becomes normal and answers: *'to the instruments of such a strategy belong aimed disinformation (e.g., through statistics), moral appeals, emotionalising addresses (e.g., talk of the decline of Germany), the emotional exploitation of major events (e.g., "Cologne") etc.*' (Heitmeyer 2018, 275). Yet, I would put this statement right back towards Heitmeyer and others, whose frequent references to anomic processes in societies and questionable use of opinion polls (see also Mondon 2022b) go exactly in that direction.

Of course, predicting the fortunes of the far-right is virtually impossible. Especially at the present conjuncture of writing at the end of a pandemic, at the beginning of the potentially biggest social squeeze in decades, during high-inflation, and a war on Europe's doorstep in Ukraine. But, while writing this conclusion, another coincidence occurred. The *Leitkultur* advocate and by-now head of the CDU, Friedrich Merz, stated in an interview that Germany experiences a "welfare tourism" of Ukrainian refugees supposedly traveling back and forth between the two countries (Politico 2022). The parallels are glaring to Söder's "asylum tourism" claim of 2018. According to Merz, 'we have a problem here and it is getting worse' (ibid). For now, it seems, mainstreaming processes are here to stay. We have a problem here and, unless we learn quickly, it might get worse.

Bibliography

Adorno, Theodor W., Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel Levinson, and Nevitt Sanford. 2019. *The Authoritarian Personality*. London and New York: Verso.

AfD. 2013. *Wahlprogramm - Parteitagsbeschluss Vom 14.04.2013*.

———. 2016. *Programm Für Deutschland - Das Grundsatzprogramm Der Alternative Für Deutschland*.

———. 2017a. 'Alexander Gauland: Innere Sicherheit Erodiert – Schluss Mit Vertuschung Und Beschönigungen'. https://www.afd.de/alexander-gauland-innere-sicherheit-erodiert-schluss-mit-vertuschung-und-beschoenigungen/ (March 15, 2021).

———. 2017b. 'Alice Weidel: Präventivmaßnahmen Gegen Sexualstraftäter'. https://www.afd.de/alice-weidel-praeventivmassnahmen-gegen-sexualstraftaeter/ (March 15, 2021).

———. 2017c. 'Programm Für Deutschland. Wahlprogramm Der Alternative Für Deutschland Für Die Wahl Zum Deutschen Bundestag Am 24. September 2017.'

AfD Brandenburg. 2014. 'Wahlprogramm Auf Russisch'. https://afd-brandenburg.de/2014/08/24/wahlprogramm-auf-russisch/ (September 21, 2022).

AfD Bundestag. 2018. 'Weidel: BKA-Statistik Belegt Dramatisch Verschärfte Sicherheitslage'. https://afdbundestag.de/weidel-bka-statistik-belegt-dramatisch-verschaerfte-sicherheitslage/ (September 12, 2022).

Albertson, Bethany, and Adria Lawrence. 2009. 'After the Credits Roll: The Long-Term Effects of Educational Television on Public Knowledge and Attitudes'. *American Politics Research* 37(2): 275–300.

Alcoff, Linda. 1991. 'The Problem of Speaking for Others'. *Cultural Critique* (20): 5–32.

Allen, Amy. 2000. 'The Anti-Subjective Hypothesis: Michel Foucault and the Death of the Subject'. *The Philosophical Forum* 31(2): 113–30.

Altemeyer, Bob. 1981. *Right-Wing Authoritarianism*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

———. 1988. *Enemies of Freedom: Understanding Right-Wing Authoritarianism*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

———. 1996. *The Authoritarian Specter*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press.

———. 2004. ‘The Other “Authoritarian Personality”’. In *Political Psychology: Key Readings*, eds. John T. Jost and Jim Sidanius. New York and Hove: Psychology Press.

Althusser, Louis. 1994. ‘Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)’. In *Mapping Ideology*, ed. Slavoj Žižek. London and New York: Verso.

Arditi, Benjamin. 2005. ‘Populism as an Internal Periphery of Democratic Politics’. In *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, ed. Francisco Panizza. London and New York: Verso.

Art, David. 2006. *The Politics of the Nazi Past in Germany and Austria*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2007. ‘Reacting to the Radical Right: Lessons from Germany and Austria’. *Party Politics* 13(3).

———. 2011. *Inside the Radical Right: The Development of Anti- Immigrant Parties in Western Europe*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2018. ‘The AfD and the End of Containment in Germany?’ *German Politics and Society* 36(2): 76–86.

Arzheimer, Kai. 2015. ‘The AfD’s Facebook Wall: A New Hub for Far-Right Mobilisation in Germany?’

———. 2019. ‘“Don’t Mention the War!” How Populist Right-Wing Radicalism Became (Almost) Normal in Germany’. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 57(S1): 90–102.

———. forthcoming. ‘The Electoral Breakthrough of the AfD and the East-West Divide In German Politics’. In *From the Streets to Parliament? The Fourth Wave of Far-Right Politics in Germany*, London: Routledge.

Arzheimer, Kai, and Carl C. Berning. 2019. ‘How the Alternative for Germany (AfD) and Their Voters Veered to the Radical Right, 2013–2017’. *Electoral Studies* 60.

Arzheimer, Kai, and Elisabeth Carter. 2006. ‘Political Opportunity Structures and Right-Wing Extremist Party Success’. *European Journal of Political Research* 45(3): 419–43.

Backes, Uwe. 1990. ‘The West German Republikaner: Profile of a Nationalist, Populist Party of Protest’. *Patterns of Prejudice* 24(1): 3–18.

———. 2018. ‘The Radical Right in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland’. In *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, ed. Jens Rydgren. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bale, Tim. 2003. ‘Cinderella and Her Ugly Sisters: The Mainstream and Extreme Right in Europe’s Bipolarising Party Systems’. *West European Politics* 26(3): 67–90.

Balibar, Etienne, and Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein. 1991. *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*. London and New York: Verso.

Bandura, Albert. 1977. *Social Learning Theory*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J: Prentice Hall.

———. 2004. 'Social Cognitive Theory for Personal and Social Change by Enabling Media'. In *Entertainment-Education and Social Change: History, Research, and Practice*, eds. Arvind Singhal, Michael J. Cody, Everett M. Rogers, and Miguel Sabido. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 75–96.

BBC. 2016. 'Cologne Attacks' Profound Impact on Europe'. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35261988 (September 21, 2022).

Beauzamy, Brigitte. 2013. 'Explaining the Rise of the Front National to Electoral Prominence: Multi-Faceted or Contradictory Models?' In *Right-Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse*, eds. Ruth Wodak, Majid KhosraviNik, and Brigitte Mral. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Beck, Ulrich. 1992. *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London: Sage Publications.

Beck, Ulrich, Anthony Giddens, and Scott Lash. 1994. *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Behrendes, Udo. 2016. 'Die Kölner Silvesternacht 2015/2016 Und Ihre Folgen: Wahrnehmungsperspektiven, Erkenntnisse Und Instrumentalisierungen'. *Neue Kriminalpolitik* 28(3): 322–43.

Bell, Daniel. 2002. 'The Dispossessed'. In *The Radical Right*, ed. Daniel Bell. London and New York: Routledge.

Berliner Morgenpost. 2018. 'Linke Öffnet Sich Für Bamf-Untersuchung Im Bundestag'. https://www.morgenpost.de/politik/article214397555/Linke-oeffnet-sich-fuer-Bamf-Untersuchung-im-Bundestag.html (September 17, 2022).

Betz, Hans-Georg. 1993. 'The New Politics of Resentment: Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe'. *Comparative Politics* 25(4): 413–27.

———. 1994. *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

———. 2002. 'Rechtspopulismus in Westeuropa: aktuelle Entwicklungen und politische Bedeutung'. *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft* 31(3): 251–64.

Bezjak, Garonne. 2016. 'Der Straftatbestand des § 177 StGB (Sexuelle Nötigung; Vergewaltigung) im Fokus des Gesetzgebers'. *KJ Kritische Justiz* 49(4): 557–71.

Bielicki, Jan. 2018. 'Cologne's New Year's Eve Sexual Assaults - The Turning Point in German Media Coverage'. In *Refugee News, Refugee Politics - Journalism,*

Public Opinion and Policymaking in Europe, eds. Giovanna Dell'Orto and Irmgard Wetzstein. New York: Routledge.

BILD. 2010. 'Warum Hofieren Sie Den Islam so, Herr Präsident?' https://www.bild.de/politik/2010/wuetende-buerger-schreiben-an-den-bundespraesidenten-14203828.bild.html (September 21, 2022).

———. 2016. 'Kölner Sex-Mob: Das Geheime Polizei-Protokoll'. https://www.bild.de/news/inland/silvester/das-geheime-polizei-protokoll-44048000.bild.html (September 21, 2022).

———. 2017. 'Leitkultur Für Deutschland, Was Ist Das Eigentlich? - „Wir Sind Nicht Burka"'. https://www.bild.de/politik/inland/thomas-de-maiziere/leitkultur-fuer-deutschland-51509022.bild.html (September 21, 2022).

BKA. 2015. *Kriminalität Im Kontext von Zuwanderung - Bundeslagebild 2015*. Wiesbaden.

———. 2017. *Kriminalität Im Kontext von Zuwanderung - Bundeslagebild 2016*. Wiesbaden.

———. 2018. *Kriminalität Im Kontext von Zuwanderung - Bundeslagebild 2017*. Wiesbaden.

———. 2019a. *Kriminalität Im Kontext von Zuwanderung - Bundeslagebild 2018*. Wiesbaden.

———. 2019b. *The 2017 German Victimisation Survey - Victimisation, Crime Related Attitudes and Perceptions of Insecurity and Crime in Germany*. Wiesbaden.

———. 2020. *Kriminalität Im Kontext von Zuwanderung - Bundeslagebild 2019*. Wiesbaden.

Blank, Robert H. 2017. 'The Brain and Politics'. In *Handbook of Biology and Politics*, eds. Steven Peterson A. and Albert Somit. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.

BMI. 2017. *Bericht Zur Polizeilichen Kriminalstatistik 2016*. Berlin.

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. 1997. 'Rethinking Racism: Toward a Structural Interpretation'. *American Sociological Review* 62(3): 465–80.

———. 2018. *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America*. Fifth edition. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Bornschier, Simon. 2010. *Cleavage Politics and the Populist Right: The New Cultural Conflict in Western Europe*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

———. 2012. 'Why a Right-Wing Populist Party Emerged in France but Not in Germany: Cleavages and Actors in the Formation of a New Cultural Divide'. *European Political Science Review* 4(1): 121–45.

———. 2018. ‘Globalization, Cleavages and the Radical Right’. In *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, ed. Jens Rydgren. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bornschier, Simon, and Hanspeter Kriesi. 2013. ‘The Populist Right, the Working Class, and the Changing Face of Class Politics’. In *Class Politics and the Radical Right*, ed. Jens Rydgren. Abingdon: Routledge.

Boulila, Stefanie C, and Christiane Carri. 2017. ‘On Cologne: Gender, Migration and Unacknowledged Racisms in Germany’. *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 24(3): 286–93.

Bowe, Brian J, Shahira Fahmy, and Wayne Wanta. 2013. ‘Missing Religion: Second Level Agenda Setting and Islam in American Newspapers’. *International Communication Gazette* 75(7): 636–52.

Brecht, Bertolt. 2017. *War Primer*. London and New York: Verso.

Brown, Katy. 2022. *Talking ‘with’ and ‘about’ the Far Right: Putting the Mainstream in Mainstreaming*. Bath: University of Bath.

Brown, Katy, and Aurelien Mondon. 2021. ‘Populism, the Media, and the Mainstreaming of the Far Right: The Guardian’s Coverage of Populism as a Case Study’. *Politics* 41(3): 279–95.

Brown, Katy, Aurelien Mondon, and Aaron Winter. 2021. ‘The Far Right, the Mainstream and Mainstreaming: Towards a Heuristic Framework’. *Journal of Political Ideologies* 0(0): 1–18.

van der Brug, Wouter, Meindert Fennema, and Jean Tillie. 2005. ‘Why Some Anti-Immigrant Parties Fail and Others Succeed: A Two-Step Model of Aggregate Electoral Support’. *Comparative Political Studies* 38(5).

van der Brug, Wouter, and Anthony Mughan. 2007. ‘Charisma, Leader Effects and Support for Right-Wing Populist Parties’. *Party Politics* 13(1): 29–51.

BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN. 2017. ‘Zukunft Wird Aus Mut Gemacht. Bundestagswahlprogramm 2017’.

Butler, Judith. 1997. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Butterwegge, Christoph, Gudrun Hentges, and Gerd Wiegel. 2018. *Rechtspopulisten im Parlament: Polemik, Agitation und Propaganda der AfD*. Frankfurt am Main: Westend Verlag.

Cantle, Ted et al. 2006. *Review of Community Cohesion in Oldham - Final Report*. Coventry: Institute of Community Cohesion.

———. 2008. ‘Parallel Lives - the Development of Community Cohesion’. In *Citizenship, Cohesion and Solidarity*, ed. Nick Johnson. s.l.: The Smith Institue.

Carpentier, Nico, and Benjamin de Cleen. 2007. ‘Bringing Discourse Theory into Media Studies: The Applicability of Discourse Theoretical Analysis (DTA) for the Study of Media Practises and Discourses’. *Journal of Language and Politics* 6(2): 265–93.

CDU/CSU. 2017. ‘Für Ein Deutschland, in Dem Wir Gut Und Gerne Leben. Regierungsprogramm 2017-2021’.

Chin, Rita C.-K. 2007. *The Guest Worker Question in Postwar Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cohen, Stanley. 2011. *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Connolly, William E. 1995. *The Ethos of Pluralization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

———. 2002. *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

Coole, Diana H. 2000. *Negativity and Politics: Dionysus and Dialectics from Kant to Poststructuralism*. London: Routledge.

correctiv. 2018. ‘Diese Abgeordneten Stimmten 1997 Gegen Die Strafbarkeit von Vergewaltigung in Der Ehe’. https://correctiv.org/faktencheck/politik/2018/11/14/diese-abgeordneten-stimmten-1997-gegen-die-strafbarkeit-von-vergewaltigung-in-der-ehe/ (September 21, 2022).

———. 2019. ‘„Wochenblick“ Verbreitet Falsche Zahlen Zur Kriminalität von Zuwanderern’. https://correctiv.org/faktencheck/migration/2019/06/25/wochenblick-verbreitet-falsche-zahlen-zur-kriminalitaet-von-zuwanderern/ (September 7, 2022).

Crepaz, Markus M. L. 2020. ‘Coveting Uniformity in a Diverse World: The Authoritarian Roots of Welfare Chauvinism in Postmigration Crisis Germany’. *Social Science Quarterly* 101(4): 1255–70.

Darschin, Wolfgang, and Camille Zubayr. 2002. ‘Politische Diskussionssendungen Und Magazine Im Urteil Der Zuschauer.’ *Media Perspektiven* 5.

Davis, Mike. 2020. *Old Gods, New Enigmas: Marx’s Lost Theory*. London and New York: Verso.

De Cleen, Benjamin, Jason Glynos, and Aurelien Mondon. 2018. ‘Critical Research on Populism: Nine Rules of Engagement’. *Organization* 25(5): 649–61.

De Cleen, Benjamin, and Yannis Stavrakakis. 2017. ‘Distinctions and Articulations: A Discourse Theoretical Framework for the Study of Populism and Nationalism’. *Javnost - The Public* 24(4): 301–19.

Decker, Frank. 2012. ‘Warum Der Parteiförmige Rechtspopulismus in Deutschland so Erfolglos Ist’. *vorgänge - Zeitschrift für Bürgerrechte und Gesellschaftspolitik* 197.

Decker, Frank, and Viola Neu. 2018. *Handbuch der deutschen Parteien*. 3rd ed. Wiesbaden: Springer-Verlag.

der Bundespräsident. 2010. ‘Speech to Mark the Twentieth Anniversary of German Unity’. https://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/DE/Christian-Wulff/UebersetzteReden/2010/101003-Deutsche-Einheit-englisch.html?nn=2748000 (September 20, 2022).

Der Bundeswahlleiter. 2013. *Endgültiges Amtliches Ergebnis Der Bundestagswahl 2013*. https://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/info/presse/mitteilungen/bundestagswahl-2013/2013-10-09-endgueltiges-amtliches-ergebnis-der-bundestagswahl-2013.html (September 12, 2022).

———. 2017. *Bundestagswahl 2017*. https://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/bundestagswahlen/2017/ergebnisse/bund-99.html#zweitstimmen-prozente12 (September 12, 2022).

der Spiegel. 2010a. ‘Gabriel Fordert Härtere Gangart in Der Ausländerpolitik’. https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/spd-gabriel-fordert-haertere-gangart-in-der-auslaenderpolitik-a-718322.html (September 20, 2022).

———. 2010b. ‘The Man Who Divided Germany: Why Sarrazin’s Integration Demagoguery Has Many Followers’. https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/the-man-who-divided-germany-why-sarrazin-s-integration-demagoguery-has-many-followers-a-715876.html (September 20, 2022).

———. 2016a. ‘Burka in Deutschland: Wie Viele Vollverschleierte Frauen Gibt Es in Deutschland?’ https://www.spiegel.de/panorama/burka-in-deutschland-wie-viele-vollverschleierte-frauen-gibt-es-in-deutschland-a-00000000-0003-0001-0000-000000773270 (September 21, 2022).

———. 2016b. ‘Köln: CSU Entdeckt Das Thema Lügenpresse Für Sich’. https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/koeln-csu-entdeckt-das-thema-luegenpresse-fuer-sich-a-1070689.html (September 21, 2022).

———. 2017. ‘Ich Habe Keinen Volkspädagogischen Auftrag’. https://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/frank-plasberg-und-georg-diedenhofen-von-hart-aber-fair-ueber-die-afd-a-1171732.html (September 12, 2022).

———. 2019. ‘Kölner Silvesternacht: Ernüchternde Bilanz Der Justiz’. https://www.spiegel.de/panorama/justiz/koelner-silvesternacht-ernuechternde-bilanz-der-justiz-a-1257182.html (September 23, 2022).

der Spiegel International. 2016. ‘Cologne Attacks Trigger Raw Debate on Immigration in Germany’. https://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/cologne-attacks-

trigger-raw-debate-on-immigration-in-germany-a-1071175.html (September 21, 2022).

Derrida, Jacques. 1997. *Of Grammatology*. Corrected Edition. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Deutscher Bundestag. 2010. ‘Plenarprotokoll 17/65’.

———. 2011. *Drucksache 17/4798*. https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/17/047/1704798.pdf (September 20, 2022).

Deutscher Kulturrat. 2018. ‘Auszeit: Ein Jahr Talkpause Im Ersten Und Im ZDF?’ https://www.kulturrat.de/presse/pressemitteilung/auszeit-ein-jahr-talkpause-im-ersten-und-im-zdf/ (September 12, 2022).

Deutschlandfunk. 2017. ‘AfD-Spitzenkandidatin Alice Weidel - „Wir Schaffen Anreize Für Eine Schlepperindustrie“’. https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/afd-spitzenkandidatin-alice-weidel-wir-schaffen-anreize-100.html (September 12, 2022).

———. 2019. ‘„Öffentlich-Rechtliche Talkshows Sind Werbeträger Für Die AfD“’. https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/hart-aber-fair-anne-will-und-co-oeffentlich-rechtliche.2907.de.html?dram:article_id=453030 (September 12, 2022).

Deutschlandfunk Kultur. 2018. ‘Framing in Den TV - Talkshows Schon Der Titel Wird Zur Deutung’. https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/framing-in-den-tv-talkshows-schon-der-titel-wird-zur-deutung.1264.de.html?dram:article_id=420546 (September 12, 2022).

die Welt. 2000. ‘Einwanderung Und Identität’. https://www.welt.de/print-welt/article540438/Einwanderung-und-Identitaet.html (September 20, 2022).

———. 2006. ‘Schäuble: Islam Ist Teil Deutschlands’. https://www.welt.de/politik/article156022/Schaeuble-Islam-ist-Teil-Deutschlands.html (September 21, 2022).

———. 2016a. ‘Das Protokoll Zur Kölner Chaos-Nacht Zum Nachlesen’. https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article150729450/Das-Protokoll-zur-Koelner-Chaos-Nacht-zum-Nachlesen.html (September 21, 2022).

———. 2016b. ‘Junge Männer, Die Die Kultur Der Gewalt Mitbringen’. https://www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/article155134929/Junge-Maenner-die-die-Kultur-der-Gewalt-mitbringen.html (September 21, 2022).

———. 2019. ‘Gewalt von Zuwanderern Gegen Deutsche Nimmt Zu’. https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article191584235/BKA-Lagebild-Gewalt-von-Zuwanderern-gegen-Deutsche-nimmt-zu.html (July 9, 2022).

die Zeit. 2016. ‘Köln: Übergriffe Waren Laut BKA-Chef Abgesprochen’. https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2016-01/holger-muench-bka-koeln-taeter-organisiert (September 21, 2022).

———. 2017. ‘Wie Kriminell Sind Flüchtlinge?’ https://www.zeit.de/2017/17/kriminalitaet-fluechtlinge-zunahme-gewalttaten-statistik/komplettansicht (September 9, 2022).

———. 2019. ‘Heiße Luft’. https://www.zeit.de/2019/34/asylpolitik-bamf-bremen-bescheide-betrug-fluechtlinge (September 16, 2022).

———. 2020. ‘Je Schlechter Es Deutschland Geht, Desto Besser Für Die AfD’. https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2020-09/christian-lueth-afd-alexander-gauland-menschenfeindlichkeit-migration?utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F (September 12, 2022).

van Dijk, Teun. 1988. *News as Discourse*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Disch, Lisa. 2015. ‘The “Constructivist Turn” in Democratic Representation: A Normative Dead-End?’ *Constellations* 22(4): 487–99.

Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper.

Drüeke, Ricarda. 2016. *Die TV-Berichterstattung in ARD und ZDF über die Silvesternacht 2015/16 in Köln*. Berlin: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung.

Duan, Demin. 2019. ‘On Authoritarian Political Representation in Contemporary China’. *Politics and Governance* 7(3): 199–207.

Duffy, Bobby. 2018. *The Perils of Perception: Why We’re Wrong About Nearly Everything*. London: Atlantic Books.

Durkheim, Émile. 2002. *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*. ed. George Simpson. London: Routledge.

dw. 2018. ‘AfD’s Gauland Plays down Nazi Era as a “bird Shit” in German History’. https://www.dw.com/en/afds-gauland-plays-down-nazi-era-as-a-bird-shit-in-german-history/a-44055213 (September 20, 2022).

———. 2020. ‘Berlin Bans Rally by Vegan Chef and Conspiracy Theorist Attila Hildmann’. *DW.COM*. https://www.dw.com/en/berlin-bans-rally-by-vegan-chef-and-conspiracy-theorist-attila-hildmann/a-54299794 (October 6, 2020).

Eatwell, Roger. 1994. ‘Why Are Fascism and Racism Reviving in Western Europe?’ *The Political Quarterly* 65(3): 313–25.

———. 2000. ‘The Rebirth of the “extreme Right” in Western Europe?’ *Parliamentary Affairs* 53(3): 407–25.

———. 2017. ‘Ten Theories of the Extreme Right’. In *The Populist Radical Right - a Reader*, ed. Cas Mudde. Abingdon: Routledge.

———. 2018. ‘Charisma and the Radical Right’. In *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, ed. Jens Rydgren. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Eklundh, Emmy. 2019. *Emotions, Protest, Democracy: Collective Identities in Contemporary Spain*. New York and Abingdon: Routledge.

Ellinas, Antonis A. 2010. *The Media and the Far Right in Western Europe: Playing the Nationalist Card*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Esping-Andersen, Gøsta. 1990. *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Evans, Jocelyn. 2004. 'Fitting Extremism into the Rational Choice Paradigm'. *Government and Opposition* 39(1): 110–18.

Ewing, Katherine. 2008. *Stolen Honor: Stigmatizing Muslim Men in Berlin*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Falter, Jürgen W., and Siegfried Schumann. 1988. 'Affinity towards Right-wing Extremism in Western Europe'. *West European Politics* 11(2): 96–110.

Faye, Jean Pierre. 1977. *Theorie Der Erzählung. Einführung in Die 'Totalitäten Sprachen'*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.

FAZ. 2010a. 'Christian Wulff: Präsident Aller Menschen'. https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/christian-wulff-praesident-aller-menschen-1634423.html (September 21, 2022).

———. 2010b. 'CSU-Politiker: Islam Nicht Teil Unserer Kultur'. https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/debatte-nach-wulff-rede-csu-politiker-islam-nicht-teil-unserer-kultur-11057331.html (September 21, 2022).

———. 2010c. '„Unsere Leitkultur ist das Grundgesetz"'. https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/im-gespraech-cem-oezdemir-unsere-leitkultur-ist-das-grundgesetz-11066710.html (September 21, 2022).

———. 2010d. 'Wulff Und Erdogan: Die Islamfreunde'. https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/wulff-und-erdogan-die-islamfreunde-1588620.html (September 21, 2022).

———. 2016. 'Öffentlich-Rechtliche Regie: Wer Zur Gewalt in Köln Nicht Gefragt Ist'. https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/medien/oeffentlich-rechtliche-regie-wer-zur-gewalt-in-koeln-nicht-gefragt-ist-14004450.html (September 21, 2022).

Fekete, Liz. 2009. *A Suitable Enemy: Racism, Migration and Islamophobia in Europe*. London: Pluto Press.

———. 2018. *Europe's Fault Lines: Racism and the Rise of the Right*. London and New York: Verso.

Felluga, Dino Franco. 2015. *Critical Theory: The Key Concepts*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Feltes, Thomas, Katrin List, and Maximilian Bertamini. 2018. 'More Refugees, More Offenders, More Crime? Critical Comments with Data from Germany'. In

Refugees and Migrants in Law and Policy, eds. Helmut Kury and Sławomir Redo. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

fernsehserien.de. 2016. 'Folge 695: Flüchtlinge Unter Verdacht – Willkommenskultur Am Ende?' https://www.fernsehserien.de/maybrit-illner/folgen/695-fluechtlinge-unter-verdacht-willkommenskultur-am-ende-1036638 (September 12, 2022).

Fink, Bruce. 1995. *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.

Focus. 2018. 'ARD-Talkerin Anne Will - "Menschen Schauen Uns Vor Allem Dort, Wo Die AfD Kein Bein Auf Den Boden Bekommt"'. https://www.focus.de/kultur/medien/ard-talkerin-anne-will-menschen-schauen-uns-vor-allem-dort-wo-die-afd-kein-bein-auf-den-boden-bekommt_id_9422926.html (September 12, 2022).

———. 'Bericht: Zahl Der Gewalttaten Durch Zuwanderer Gestiegen'. https://www.focus.de/politik/videos/kriminalitaet-in-deutschland-bericht-zahl-der-gewalttaten-durch-zuwanderer-gestiegen_id_6986030.html (September 9, 2022).

Foroutan, Naika, ed. 2010. *Sarrazins Thesen auf dem Prüfstand*. Berlin: Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. https://edoc.hu-berlin.de/handle/18452/5745 (September 27, 2022).

Foucault, Michel. 1979. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Freeden, Michael. 2003. *Ideology: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Freud, Anna. 1992. *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence*. London: Taylor & Francis.

Freud, Sigmund. 1922. *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. London: The International psychoanalytical press.

Friedrich, Sebastian. 2011. 'Rassismus in Der Leistungsgesellschaft'. In *Rassimus in Der Leistungsgesellschaft - Analysen Und Kritische Perspektiven Zu Den Rassistischen Normalisierungsprozessen Der 'Sarrazindebatte'*, ed. Sebastian Friedrich. Münster: edition assemblage.

———. 2017. *Die AfD: Analysen – Hintergründe – Kontroversen*. Berlin: Bertz und Fischer.

Frindte, Wolfgang, and Nico Dietrich. 2017. 'Einstellungen Zum Islam Und Zu Muslimen I'. In *Muslime, Flüchtlinge Und Pegida: Sozialpsychologische Und Kommunikationswissenschaftliche Studien in Zeiten Globaler Bedrohungen*, Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Geiges, Lars, Stine Marg, and Franz Walter. 2015. *Pegida: Die schmutzige Seite der Zivilgesellschaft?* Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.

Givens, Terri E. 2005. *Voting Radical Right in Western Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Glynos, Jason. 2001. 'The Grip of Ideology: A Lacanian Approach to the Theory of Ideology'. *Journal of Political Ideologies* 6(2): 191–214.

Glynos, Jason, and David Howarth. 2007. *Logics of Critical Explanation in Social and Political Theory*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Glynos, Jason, and Yannis Stavrakakis. 2008. 'Lacan and Political Subjectivity: Fantasy and Enjoyment in Psychoanalysis and Political Theory'. *Subjectivity* 24(1): 256–74.

Goebel, Simon. 2017. *Politische Talkshows über Flucht: Wirklichkeitskonstruktionen und Diskurse. Eine kritische Analyse*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.

Goerres, Achim, Dennis C. Spies, and Staffan Kumlin. 2018. 'The Electoral Supporter Base of the Alternative for Germany'. *Swiss Political Science Review* 24(3): 246–69.

Goeßmann, David. 2019. *Die Erfindung der bedrohten Republik - Wie Flüchtlinge und Demokratie entsorgt werden*. Berlin: Das Neue Berlin.

Golder, Matt. 2003. 'Explaining Variation In The Success Of Extreme Right Parties In Western Europe': *Comparative Political Studies* 36(4).

———. 2016. 'Far Right Parties in Europe'. *Annual Review of Political Science* 19(1): 477–97.

Goode, Erich, and Nachman Ben-Yehuda. 1994. *Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Goodfellow, Maya. 2019. *Hostile Environment: How Immigrants Became Scapegoats*. London and New York: Verso.

Götz, Norbert. 1997. 'Modernisierungsverlierer Oder Gegner Der Reflexiven Moderne?' *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 26(6): 393–413.

Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. eds. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Green, David A. 2006. 'Public Opinion Versus Public Judgment About Crime: Correcting the "Comedy of Errors"'. *The British Journal of Criminology* 46(1): 131–54.

Griggs, Steven, and David Howarth. 2013. *The Politics of Airport Expansion in the United Kingdom: Hegemony, Policy and the Rhetoric of 'Sustainable Aviation'*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Haarhoff, Heike. 2020. *Nafris, Normen, Nachrichten: Die Standards journalistischer Berichterstattung am Beispiel der Herkunftsnennung mutmaßlicher Straftäter der Kölner Silvesternacht 2015/2016*. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1996. *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hadler, Markus. 2004. 'Modernisierungsverlierer Und -Gewinner Ihre Anteile, Wahrnehmungen Und Einstellungen in Einem 30 Staaten Umfassenden Vergleich'. *SWS-Rundschau* 44(1).

Hall, Stuart. 1980. 'Encoding/Decoding'. In *Culture, Media, Language*, eds. Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe, and Paul Willis. London: Hutchinson & Co.

———. 1982. 'The Rediscovery of "Ideology": Return of the Repressed in Media Studies'. In *Culture, Society and the Media*, eds. Tony Bennett, James Curran, Michael Gurevitch, and Janet Wollacott. London: Routledge.

———, eds. 2013. *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*. 2nd ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Handelsblatt. 2012. 'Lukratives Buch: Wie Sarrazin Millionär Wurde'. https://www.handelsblatt.com/unternehmen/it-medien/lukratives-buch-wie-sarrazin-millionaer-wurde/6647994.html (September 20, 2022).

Hansen, Michael A., and Jonathan Olsen. 2019. 'Flesh of the Same Flesh: A Study of Voters for the Alternative for Germany (AfD) in the 2017 Federal Election'. *German Politics* 28(1): 1–19.

Hark, Sabine, and Paula-Irene Villa. 2017. *Unterscheiden Und Herrschen - Ein Essay Zu Den Ambivalenten Verflechtungen von Rassismus, Sexismus Und Feminismus in Der Gegenwart*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.

Hartleb, Florian. 2022. 'The Right-Wing Populist Disruption in the Berlin Republic. Opportunity Structures and Success of the Alternative for Germany (AfD)'. In *The Legacy and Impact of German Unification: The Elusive Dream of 'Flourishing Landscapes'*, eds. Michael Oswald and John Robertson. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 231–47.

Häusler, Alexander. 2002. 'Multikulturalismus Als Bedrohung Deutscher Identität. Migration Und Integration in Medien Der Extremen Rechten'. In *Themen Der Rechte - Themen Der Mitte: Zuwanderung, Demografischer Wandel Und Nationalbewusstsein*, eds. Christoph Butterwege et al. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien.

Hawkins, Kirk, Madeleine Read, and Teun Pauwels. 2017. 'Populism and Its Causes'. In *The Oxford Handbook of Populism*, eds. Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Pierre Ostiguy. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Heinisch, Reinhard, and Annika Werner. 2019. 'Who Do Populist Radical Right Parties Stand for? Representative Claims, Claim Acceptance and Descriptive Representation in the Austrian FPÖ and German AfD'. *Representation* 55(4): 475–92.

Heinrich Böll Stiftung. 2017. ‘Die AfD Und Die Öffentlich-Rechtlichen Medien: „Lassen Sie Uns Doch Mal Vernünftig Miteinander Reden“’. https://www.boell.de/de/2017/05/04/die-afd-und-die-oeffentlich-rechtlichen-medien-jetzt-lassen-sie-uns-doch-einmal (September 12, 2022).

Heitmeyer, Wilhelm. 1992. *Rechtsextreme Orientierungen Bei Jugendlichen - Empirische Erklärungsmuster Einer Untersuchung Zur Politischen Sozialisation*. Weinheim and Munich: Juventa Verlag.

———. 1998. ‘Versagt Die »Integrationsmaschine« Stadt? Zum Problem Der Ethnisch-Kulturellen Segregation Und Ihrer Konfliktfolgen’. In *Die Krise Der Städte Analysen Zu Den Folgen Desintegrativer Stadtentwicklung Für Das Ethnisch-Kulturelle Zusammenleben*, eds. Wilhelm Heitmeyer, Rainer Dollase, and Otto Backes. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag.

———. 2018. *Autoritäre Versuchungen*. 3rd ed. Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag.

Herbert, Ulrich. 2001. *Geschichte der Ausländerpolitik in Deutschland: Saisonarbeiter, Zwangsarbeiter, Gastarbeiter, Flüchtlinge*. München: C.H.Beck.

Hernandez Aguilar, Luis Manuel. 2018. *Governing Muslims and Islam in Contemporary Germany : Race, Time, and the German Islam Conference*. Leiden: Brill.

Hess, Sabine. 2011. ‘Welcome to the Container - Zur Wissenschaftlichen Konstruktion Der Einwanderung Als Problem’. In *Rassimus in Der Leistungsgesellschaft - Analysen Und Kritische Perspektiven Zu Den Rassistischen Normalisierungsprozessen Der ‘Sarrazindebatte’*, ed. Sebastian Friedrich. Münster: edition assemblage.

Hester, Joe Bob, and Rhonda Gibson. 2003. ‘The Economy and Second-Level Agenda Setting: A Time-Series Analysis of Economic News and Public Opinion about the Economy’. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 80(1): 73–90.

Hestermann, Thomas. 2014. ‘Dämonisierung in Der Berichterstattung Über Gewaltverbrechen. Die Gespenster Sind Unter Uns.’ In *Kriminologie Ist Gesellschaftswissenschaft*, eds. Dirk Baier and Thomas Mößle. Baden-Baden: Nomos, 261–79.

———. 2018. ‘Refugees and Migrants in the Media: The Black Hole’. In *Refugees and Migrants in Law and Policy*, eds. Helmut Kury and Sławomir Redo. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

———. 2019. *Wie Häufig Nennen Medien Die Herkunft von Tatverdächtigen?* s.l.: Mediendienst Integration.

———. 2021. ‘Die Getriebenen. Immer Häufiger Berichten Leitmedien Über Ausländische Tatverdächtige Und Folgen Damit Rechtspopulistischen Deutungsmustern’. *Neue Kriminalpolitik* 33(1): 46–65.

Hestermann, Thomas, and Elisa Hoven. 2020. ‘Crime in Germany as Portrayed by the Alternative for Germany (AfD)’. *German Law Journal* 21(4): 721–38.

Hillje, Johannes. 2017. *Propaganda 4.0: wie rechte Populisten Politik machen*. Berlin: Dietz.

Hilmer, Richard, Bettina Kohlrausch, Rita Müller-Hilmer, and Jérémy Gagné. 2017. *Einstellung Und Soziale Lebenslage - Eine Spurensuche Nach Gründen Für Rechtspopulistische Orientierung, Auch Unter Gewerkschaftsmitgliedern*. Düsseldorf: Hans-Böckler-Stiftung.

Höcke, Björn, and André Poggenburg. 2015. 'Erfurter Resolution'. https://gei-ge.de/node/157127040041474/erfurterresolution.pdf (September 5, 2022).

Holly, Werner, Peter Kühn, and Ulrich Püschel. 1986. *Politische Fernsehdiskussionen: Zur medienspezifischen Inszenierung von Propaganda als Diskussion*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.

Horkheimer, Max, ed. 1987. *Studien Über Autorität Und Familie*. 2nd ed. Lüneburg: Dietrich zu Klampen Verlag.

Horvath, Kenneth. 2017. 'Migrationshintergrund'. In *Bildung und Teilhabe: Zwischen Inklusionsforderung und Exklusionsdrohung*, eds. Ingrid Miethe, Anja Tervooren, and Norbert Ricken. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, 197–216.

Hoven, Elisa. 2018. 'Die Öffentliche Wahrnehmung von Strafzumessungsentscheidungen – Anlass Für Reformen?' *Kriminalpolitische Zeitschrift* 5.

Howarth, David. 2005. 'Applying Discourse Theory: The Method of Articulation'. In *Discourse Theory in European Politics: Identity, Policy and Governance*, eds. David Howarth and Jacob Torfing. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

———. 2013. *Poststructuralism and After: Structure, Subjectivity and Power*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Howarth, David, and Aletta J. Norval. 2016. 'Demands, Articulation and Radical Democracy'. *Contemporary Political Theory* 15(3).

Husserl, Edmund. 1970. *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Ignazi, Piero. 1992. 'The Silent Counter-Revolution'. *European Journal of Political Research* 22(1): 3–34.

———. 2002. 'The Extreme Right: Defining the Object and Assessing the Causes'. In *Shadows over Europe: The Development and Impact of the Extreme Right in Western Europe*, eds. Martin Schain, Aristide Zolberg, and Patrick Hossay. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

———. 2003. *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ilie, Cornelia. 2006. ‘Talk Shows’. In *Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics*, ed. Keith Brown. Oxford: Elsevier, 489–94.

infratest dimap. 2017. *ARD-DeutschlandTREND September 2017 II / KW37*. infratest dimap. https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/deutschlandtrend-925.pdf.

Inglehart, Ronald. 1971. ‘The Silent Revolution in Europe: Intergenerational Change in Post-Industrial Societies’. *The American Political Science Review* 65(4): 991–1017.

———. 1977. *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

———. 1997. *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press.

Inglehart, Ronald, and Scott C. Flanagan. 1987. ‘Value Change in Industrial Societies’. *The American Political Science Review* 81(4): 1289–1319.

Inglehart, Ronald, and Pippa Norris. 2016. ‘Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash’.

Ivarsflaten, Elisabeth. 2005. ‘The Vulnerable Populist Right Parties: No Economic Realignment Fuelling Their Electoral Success’. *European Journal of Political Research* 44(3): 465–92.

Iyengar, Shanto, and Kyu S Hahn. 2009. ‘Red Media, Blue Media: Evidence of Ideological Selectivity in Media Use’. *Journal of Communication* 59(1): 19–39.

Iyengar, Shanto, and Donald R. Kinder. 2010. *News That Matters: Television and American Opinion, Updated Edition*. Updated Edition. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Jahn, Detlef, and Sebastian Korolczuk. 2012. ‘German Exceptionalism: The End of Nuclear Energy in Germany!’ *Environmental Politics* 21(1): 7.

Jaschke, Hans-Gerd. 2013. ‘Right-Wing Extremism and Populism in Contemporary Germany and Western Europe’. In *Right-Wing Radicalism Today: Perspectives from Europe and the US*, eds. Sabine von Mering and Timothy Wyman McCarty. Abingdon: Routledge.

Jeffries, Stuart. 2017. *Grand Hotel Abyss:The Lives of the Frankfurt School*. London and New York: Verso.

Joschko, Viola, and Luis Glaser. 2019. ‘A New Approach to Map and Quantify Representative Claims and Measure Their Validation: A Case Study Analysis’. *Politics and Governance* 7(3): 137–51.

Katsambekis, Giorgos, and Yannis Stavrakakis, eds. 2020. *Populism and the Pandemic - A Collaborative Report*. Thessaloniki.

Keller, Harald. 2009. *Die Geschichte der Talkshow in Deutschland*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag.

Keppler, Angela. 2015. Das Fernsehen als Sinnproduzent *Das Fernsehen als Sinnproduzent: Soziologische Fallstudien*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Kim, Seongcheol. 2017. 'The Populism of the Alternative for Germany (AfD): An Extended Essex School Perspective'. *Palgrave Communications* 3(1): 1–11.

Kim, Young Mie, and John Vishak. 2008. 'Just Laugh! You Don't Need to Remember: The Effects of Entertainment Media on Political Information Acquisition and Information Processing in Political Judgment'. *Journal of Communication* 58(2): 338–60.

Kitschelt, Herbert. 1995. *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

———. 2007. 'Growth and Persistence of the Radical Right in Postindustrial Democracies: Advances and Challenges in Comparative Research'. *West European Politics* 30(5): 1176–1206.

———. 2018. 'Party Systems and Radical Right-Wing Parties'. In *The Oxford Handbook of the Radical Right*, ed. Jens Rydgren. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Knigge, Pia. 1998. 'The Ecological Correlates of Right-Wing Extremism in Western Europe'. *European Journal of Political Research* 34.

König, Mathias, and Wolfgang König. 2017. 'Social TV: Twitter-Debatten Zu Politischen Informationssendungen'. *Media Perspektiven* 5.

Krell, Gert, Hans Nicklas, and Anne Ostermann. 1996. 'Immigration, Asylum, and Anti-Foreigner Violence in Germany'. *Journal of Peace Research* 33(2): 153–70.

Kriesi, Hanspeter. 1999. 'Movements of the Left, Movements of the Right: Putting the Mobilization of Two New Types of Social Movements Into Political Context'. In *Continuity and Change in Contemporary Capitalism*, eds. Herbert Kitschelt, Peter Lange, Gary Marks, and John D. Stephen. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Krippendorff, Klaus. 2018. *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*. Fourth edition. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

Krüger, Udo Michael. 1992. 'Television Programs after Deregulation in Germany'. *Communications* 17(3): 297–310.

———. 2002. 'Thementrends Im Talkshowangebot Der Neunziger Jahre'. In *Talk Auf Allen Kanälen - Angebote, Akteure Und Nutzer von Fernsehgesprächssendungen*, eds. Jens Tenscher and Christian Schicha. Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag.

Krüger, Udo Michael, Thomas Zapf-Schramm, and Maria Jung. 2019. ‘Sendungsformen, Themen Und Akteure Im Nonfictionangebot von ARD, ZDF, RTL Und Sat.1 - Programmanalyse 2018 Teil 2’. *Media Perspektiven* 5.

Krzyżanowski, Michał. 2020. ‘Discursive Shifts and the Normalisation of Racism: Imaginaries of Immigration, Moral Panics and the Discourse of Contemporary Right-Wing Populism’. *Social Semiotics* 30(4): 503–27.

Krzyżanowski, Michał, Anna Triandafyllidou, and Ruth Wodak. 2018. ‘The Mediatization and the Politicization of the “Refugee Crisis” in Europe’. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 16(1–2): 1–14.

Kubicki, Wolfgang. 2020. *Meinungsunfreiheit: Das gefährliche Spiel mit der Demokratie*. Frankfurt am Main: Westend Verlag.

Kuhn, Gabriel, and Regina Wamper. 2011. ‘“Das Wird Man Ja Wohl Noch Sagen Dürfen” - Wie Männliche, Weiße, Sozial Privilegierte Zum Opfer Der Unterdrückung Werden’. In *Rassimus in Der Leistungsgesellschaft - Analysen Und Kritische Perspektiven Zu Den Rassistischen Normalisierungsprozessen Der ‘Sarrazindebatte’*, ed. Sebastian Friedrich. Münster: edition assemblage.

Kunz, Karl-Ludwig, and Tobias Singelnstein. 2016. *Kriminologie: Eine Grundlegung*. 7th ed. Bern: Haupt Verlag.

Kuyper, Jonathan W. 2016. ‘Systemic Representation: Democracy, Deliberation, and Nonelectoral Representatives’. *American Political Science Review* 110(2): 308–24.

Lacan, Jacques. 1998. *On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge*. New York: Norton.

Laclau, Ernesto. 1990. *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*. London and New York: Verso.

———. 1996. *Emancipation(s)*. London and New York: Verso.

———. 2005a. *On Populist Reason*. London and New York: Verso.

———. 2005b. ‘Populism: What’s in a Name?’ In *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, ed. Francisco Panizza. London and New York: Verso.

———. 2014. *The Rhetorical Foundations of Society*. London and New York: Verso.

Laclau, Ernesto, and Chantal Mouffe. 2014. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. 2nd ed. London and New York: Verso.

Laclau, Ernesto, and Lilian Zac. 1994. ‘Minding the Gap: The Subject of Politics’. In *The Making of Political Identities*, ed. Ernesto Laclau. London and New York: Verso.

Landtag Nordrhein-Westfalen. 2017. *Schlussbericht Des Parlamentarischen Untersuchungsausschusses IV*.

Larsson, Anders Olof. 2013. 'Tweeting the Viewer—Use of Twitter in a Talk Show Context'. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 57(2).

Lawless, Jennifer, ed. 2012. 'Hannah Pitkin's "Concept of Representation" Revisited'. *Politics & Gender* 8(4).

Lengfeld, Holger. 2017. 'Die „Alternative für Deutschland": eine Partei für Modernisierungsverlierer?' *KZfSS Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 69(2): 209–32.

Lengfeld, Holger, and Clara Dilger. 2018. 'Kulturelle Und Ökonomische Bedrohung. Eine Analyse Der Ursachen Der Parteiidentifikation Mit Der „Alternative Für Deutschland" Mit Dem Sozio-Oekonomischen Panel 2016: Cultural and Economic Threats. A Causal Analysis of the Party Identification with the "Alternative for Germany" (AfD) Using the German Socio-Economic Panel 2016'. *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 47(3): 181–99.

Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger, Sabine. 2012. 'Die Macht Der Medien Ist Kein Selbstzweck'. In *Von Lichtgestalten Und Dunkelmännern: Wie Die Medien Über Gewalt Berichten*, ed. Thomas Hestermann. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Lilienthal, Volker, and Irene Neverla, eds. 2017. *Lügenpresse: Anatomie Eines Politischen Kampfbegriffs*. Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch.

Lindahl, Hans. 2003. 'Acquiring a Community: The Acquis and the Institution of European Legal Order'. *European Law Journal* 9(4): 433–50.

Lipset, Seymour Martin. 1983. *Political Man*. London: Heinemann.

Lubbers, Marcel, and Peer Scheepers. 2000. 'Individual and Contextual Characteristics of the German Extreme Right–Wing Vote in the 1990s. A Test of Complementary Theories'. *European Journal of Political Research* 38(1): 63–94.

Luborsky, Mark R., and Robert L. Rubinstein. 1995. 'Sampling in Qualitative Research: Rationale, Issues, and Methods'. *Research on Aging* 17(1): 89–113.

Lukács, György. 1974. *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. London: Merlin Press.

Maischberger, Sandra. 2018. 'Abschalten?' *die Zeit*. https://www.zeit.de/2018/25/sandra-maischberger-talkshow-themen-fluechtlinge-populismus-demokratie (September 12, 2022).

Maliniak, Daniel, Ryan Powers, and Barbara F. Walter. 2013. 'The Gender Citation Gap in International Relations'. *International Organization* 67(4): 889–922.

Manz, Stefan. 2004. 'Constructing a Normative National Identity: The Leitkultur Debate in Germany, 2000/2001'. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 25(5–6): 481–96.

Marchart, Oliver. 2018. *Thinking Antagonism: Political Ontology after Laclau*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Martin, John Levi. 2001. '"The Authoritarian Personality," 50 Years Later: What Lessons Are There for Political Psychology?' *Political Psychology* 22(1): 1–26.

Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. 1998. *The German Ideology: Including Theses on Feuerbach and Introduction to The Critique of Political Economy*. Amherst, N.Y: Prometheus Books.

Marx, Paul, and Georg Picot. 2013. 'The Party Preferences of Atypical Workers in Germany'. *Journal of European Social Policy* 23(2): 164–78.

Mau, Steffen. 2019. *Lütten Klein: Leben in Der Ostdeutschen Transformationsgesellschaft*. 3rd ed. Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag.

Mazzoleni, Gianpietro, Julianne Stewart, and Bruce Horsfield, eds. 2003. *The Media and Neo-Populism: A Contemporary Comparative Analysis*. Westport: Praeger.

McCombs, Maxwell, and Salma I. Ghanem. 2001. 'The Convergence of Agenda Setting and Framing'. In *Framing Public Life : Perspectives on Media and Our Understanding of the Social World*, eds. Stephen D. Reese, Jr Oscar H. Gandy, and August E. Grant. Mahwah, N.J: Routledge.

Meng, Michael. 2015. 'Silences about Sarrazin's Racism in Contemporary Germany'. *The Journal of Modern History* 87(1): 102–35.

Minkenberg, Michael. 1992. 'The New Right in Germany'. *European Journal of Political Research* 22(1): 55–81.

———. 2000. 'The Renewal of the Radical Right: Between Modernity and Anti-Modernity'. *Government and Opposition* 35(2): 170–88.

Moffitt, Benjamin. 2016. *The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style, and Representation*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

———. 2017. 'Transnational Populism? Representative Claims, Media and the Difficulty of Constructing a Transnational "People"'. *Javnost - The Public* 24(4): 409–25.

Molek-Kozakowska, Katarzyna. 2013. 'Towards a Pragma-Linguistic Framework for the Study of Sensationalism in News Headlines'. *Discourse & Communication* 7(2): 173–97.

Mondon, Aurelien. 2022a. 'Epistemologies of Ignorance in Far Right Studies: The Invisibilisation of Racism and Whiteness in Times of Populist Hype'. *Acta Politica*. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41269-022-00271-6 (March 29, 2023).

———. 2022b. 'Populism, Public Opinion, and the Mainstreaming of the Far Right: The "Immigration Issue" and the Construction of a Reactionary "People"'. *Politics*: 02633957221104726.

Mondon, Aurelien, and Aaron Winter. 2017. ‘Articulations of Islamophobia: From the Extreme to the Mainstream?’ *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40(13): 2151–79.

———. 2020. *Reactionary Democracy: How Racism and the Populist Far Right Became Mainstream*. London and New York: Verso.

Monitor. 2017. *Talkshows: Bühne Frei Für Populisten*. https://www1.wdr.de/daserste/monitor/sendungen/talkshows-102.html (September 12, 2022).

Monroe, Kristen Renwick, James Hankin, and Renée Bukovchik Van Vechten. 2000. ‘The Psychological Foundations of Identity Politics’. *Annual Review of Political Science* 3(1): 419–47.

Mouffe, Chantal. 2000. *The Democratic Paradox*. London and New York: Verso.

———. 2005a. *On the Political*. Abingdon: Routledge.

———. 2005b. ‘The “End of Politics” and the Challenge of Right-Wing Populism’. In *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, ed. Francisco Panizza. London and New York: Verso.

———. 2018. *For a Left Populism*. London and New York: Verso.

Mudde, Cas. 2007. *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2016. ‘The Study of Populist Radical Right Parties: Towards a Fourth Wave’. *C-REX Working Paper Series* 1.

———. 2018. *The Far Right in America*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Mudde, Cas, and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser. 2012. *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or Corrective for Democracy?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Muis, Jasper, and Tim Immerzeel. 2017. ‘Causes and Consequences of the Rise of Populist Radical Right Parties and Movements in Europe’. *Current Sociology* 65(6): 909–30.

Müller, Daniel. 2005. ‘Die Darstellung Ethnischer Minderheiten in Deutschen Medien’. In *Massenmedien Und Die Integration Ethnischer Minderheiten in Deutschland*, eds. Rainer Geißler and Horst Pöttker. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.

Nabers, Dirk. 2009. ‘Filling the Void of Meaning: Identity Construction in U.S. Foreign Policy After September 11, 2001’. *Foreign Policy Analysis* 5(2): 191–214.

Nachtwey, Oliver. 2017. *Die Abstiegsgesellschaft: Über das Aufbegehren in der regressiven Moderne*. 5th ed. Suhrkamp Verlag.

Nagle, John D. 1970. *The National Democratic Party: Right Radicalism in the Federal Republic of Germany*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Negri, Fedra. 2019. ‘Economic or Cultural Backlash? Rethinking Outsiders’ Voting Behavior’. *Electoral Studies* 59: 158–63.

Neidhardt, Friedhelm, and Dieter Rucht. 1993. ‘Auf Dem Weg in Die „Bewegungsgesellschaft“? Über Die Stabilisierbarkeit Sozialer Bewegungen’. *Soziale Welt* 44(3): 305–26.

Nobis, Frank. 2018. ‘Strafrecht in Zeiten Des Populismus’. In Münster.

Norris, Pippa. 2005. *Radical Right: Voters and Parties in the Electoral Market*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Norris, Pippa, and Christina Holtz-Bacha. 2001. ‘“To Entertain, Inform, and Educate”: Still the Role of Public Television’. *Political Communication* 18(2): 123–40.

Norris, Pippa, and Ronald Inglehart. 2019. *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Authoritarian-Populism*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Norval, Aletta J. 2004. ‘Hegemony after Deconstruction: The Consequences of Undecidability’. *Journal of Political Ideologies* 9(2): 139–57.

———. 2009. ‘“No Reconciliation without Redress”: Articulating Political Demands in Post-Transitional South Africa’. *Critical Discourse Studies* 6(4): 311–21.

———. 2012. ‘“Writing a Name in the Sky”: Rancière, Cavell, and the Possibility of Egalitarian Inscription’. *American Political Science Review* 106(4).

n-tv. 2020. ‘Söder: Annäherung an AfD War “Fehler”’. https://www.n-tv.de/politik/Soeder-Annaeherung-an-AfD-war-Fehler-article21863438.html (September 12, 2022).

Odmalm, Pontus, and Eve Hepburn, eds. 2019. *The European Mainstream and the Populist Radical Right*. London and New York: Routledge.

Ohlert, Martin. 2015. *Zwischen „Multikulturalismus“ Und „Leitkultur“: Integrationsleitbild Und -Politik Der Im 17. Deutschen Bundestag Vertretenen Parteien*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Oudenampsen, Merijn. 2013. ‘Explaining the Swing to the Right: The Dutch Debate on the Rise of Right-Wing Populism’. In *Right-Wing Populism in Europe - Politics and Discourse*, eds. Ruth Wodak, Majid KhosraviNik, and Brigitte Mral. London and New York: Bloomsbury.

Parsons, Talcott. 1942. ‘Some Sociological Aspects of the Fascist Movements’. *Social Forces* 21(2): 138–47.

Pates, Rebecca, and Julia Leser. 2021. *The Wolves Are Coming Back - The Politics of Fear in Eastern Germany*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Pautz, Hartwig. 2005. ‘The Politics of Identity in Germany: The Leitkultur Debate’. *Race & Class* 46(4).

Pêcheux, Michel. 1982. *Language, Semantics and Ideology: Stating the Obvious*. London: Macmillan.

Pesthy, Maria, Matthias Mader, and Harald Schoen. 2021. 'Why Is the AfD so Successful in Eastern Germany? An Analysis of the Ideational Foundations of the AfD Vote in the 2017 Federal Election'. *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 62(1): 69–91.

Pfahl-Traughber, Armin. 1999. *Rechtsextremismus in der Bundesrepublik*. München: C.H.Beck.

Pfeiffer, Christian, Michael Windzio, and Matthias Kleimann. 2005. 'Media Use and Its Impact on Crime Perception, Sentencing Attitudes and Crime Policy'. *European Journal of Criminology* 2(3): 259–86.

Pitkin, Hanna F. 1967. *The Concept of Representation*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Politico. 2022. 'German Conservative Leader Accuses Ukrainian Refugees of "Welfare Tourism"'. *POLITICO*. https://www.politico.eu/article/german-conservative-leader-accuses-ukrainian-refugees-of-welfare-tourism/ (October 1, 2022).

ProAsyl. 2020. 'Das Ende Des Angeblichen »BAMF-Skandals«'. https://www.proasyl.de/news/das-ende-des-angeblichen-bamf-skandals/ (September 16, 2022).

Quotenmeter. 2017. 'Doppeltes Mittelmaß: Martin Schulz Euphorisiert Kaum'. https://www.quotenmeter.de/n/95774/doppeltes-mittelmass-martin-schulz-euphorisiert-kaum (September 12, 2022).

Rager, Günther, and Gregor Hassemer. 2004. 'Mediennutzung Und -Gestaltung in Einer Alternden Gesellschaft'. In *Herausforderung Demografischer Wandel*, ed. Bernhard Frevel. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Rancière, Jacques. 1999. *Dis-Agreement: Politics and Philosophy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Rawls, John. 1999. *A Theory of Justice*. Rev. ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Richter, Frank. 2018. *Hört Endlich Zu!: Weil Demokratie Auseinandersetzung Bedeutet*. 2nd ed. Berlin: Ullstein.

Rippl, Susanne, and Christian Seipel. 2018. 'Modernisierungsverlierer, Cultural Backlash, Postdemokratie. Was Erklärt Rechtspopulistische Orientierungen? (Modernization, Cultural Backlash, Post-Democracy. Which Approach Explains the Development of Right-Wing Populist Orientations?)'. *KZfSS Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 70(2): 237–54.

Rohgalf, Jan. 2016. 'Kollektive Identität Als Mauer: Versuch Über Die Leitkultur'. In *Menschen, Macht Und Mauern - Fallbeispiele Und Perspektiven*, eds. Ludmila Lutz-Auras and Pierre Gottschlich. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Ronderos, Sebastián. 2021. ‘Hysteria in the Squares: Approaching Populism from a Perspective of Desire’. *Psychoanalysis, Culture & Society* 26.

Rosellini, Jay. 2019. *The German New Right: AFD, Pegida and the Re-Imagining of National Identity*. London: Hurst & Company. https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat08605a&AN=uelc.b2401085&site=eds-live&authtype=sso&custid=s9814295 (January 17, 2022).

Roth, Franziska S. 2015. *Die Rezeption politischer Talkshows im Fernsehen: Der Einfluss des Unterhaltungserlebens auf die Informationsverarbeitung*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. 1993. *The Social Contract and Discourses*. London: Dent.

rp-online. 2018. ‘Horst Seehofer Im RP-Interview: „Migrationsfrage Ist Die Mutter Aller Probleme“’. https://rp-online.de/politik/deutschland/horst-seehofer-lehnt-stichtagsregelung-fuer-fluechtlinge-als-fachkraefte-ab_aid-32736207 (September 17, 2022).

Rydgren, Jens. 2007. ‘The Sociology of the Radical Right’. *Annual Review of Sociology* 33(1): 241–62.

Sang, Katherine J. C. 2018. ‘Gender, Ethnicity and Feminism: An Intersectional Analysis of the Lived Experiences Feminist Academic Women in UK Higher Education’. *Journal of Gender Studies* 27(2): 192–206.

Sarrazin, Thilo. 2009. ‘Klasse Statt Masse - Von Der Hauptstadt Der Transferleistungen Zur Metropole Der Eliten’.

———. 2010. *Deutschland Schafft Sich Ab*. München: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt.

de Saussure, Ferdinand. 1983. *Course in General Linguistics*. London: Duckworth.

Saward, Michael. 2006. ‘The Representative Claim’. *Contemporary Political Theory* 5(3): 297–318.

———. 2010. *The Representative Claim*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

———. 2017. ‘Performative Representation’. In *Reclaiming Representation: Contemporary Advances in the Theory of Political Representation*, ed. Mónica Brito Vieira. Abingdon: Routledge.

Schellenberg, Britta. 2016. ‘“Lügenpresse”? - “Rechtsextremismus” Und “Rassismus” in Den Medien’. In *Rechtsextremismus Und ‘Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund’ - Interdisziplinäre Debatten, Befunde Und Bilanzen*, eds. Wolfgang Frindte, Daniel Geschke, Nicole Haußecker, and Franziska Schmidtke. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Scheuch, Erwin K., and Hans D. Klingemann. 1967. ‘Theorie Des Rechtsradikalismus in Westlichen Industriegesellschaften’. *Hamburger Jahrbuch für Wirtschafts- und Gesellschaftspolitik* 12.

Schneider, Jens. 2001. ‘Talking German: Othering Strategies in Public and Everyday Discourses’. *International Communication Gazette* 63(4): 351–63.

Schneider, Julius, and Reid Kleinberg. 2020. ‘Of Apples and Oranges - Donald Trump and the Threat of Aspirational Fascism’. *New Pretender*. http://new-pretender.com/2020/10/03/of-apples-and-oranges-donald-trump-and-the-threat-of-aspirational-fascism/.

Schultz, Tanjev. 2006. *Geschwätz oder Diskurs? - Die Rationalität politischer Talkshows im Fernsehen*. Cologne: Herbert von Halem Verlag.

Searle, John R. 1996. *The Construction of Social Reality*. London: Penguin.

Selg, Peeter, and Andreas Ventsel. 2020. *Introducing Relational Political Analysis - Political Semiotics as a Theory and Method*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Shapiro, Ian. 2002. ‘Problems, Methods, and Theories in the Study of Politics, or What’s Wrong with Political Science and What to Do about It’. *Political Theory* 30(4): 596–619.

Simon, Roger. 1991. *Gramsci’s Political Thought: An Introduction*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Slothuus, Rune, and Claes H. de Vreese. 2010. ‘Political Parties, Motivated Reasoning, and Issue Framing Effects’. *The Journal of Politics* 72(3): 630–45.

Sommer, Denise, and Georg Ruhrmann. 2010. ‘Oughts and Ideals -Framing People with Migration Background in TV News’. *conflict & communication online* 9(2).

Spezio, Michael L. et al. 2008. ‘A Neural Basis for the Effect of Candidate Appearance on Election Outcomes’. *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* 3(4): 344–52.

Spielhaus, Riem. 2011. *Wer ist hier Muslim? : die Entwicklung eines islamischen Bewusstseins in Deutschland zwischen Selbstidentifikation und Fremdzuschreibung - Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek*. Baden-Baden: Ergon.

Spier, Tim. 2010. *Modernisierungsverlierer?: Die Wählerschaft rechtspopulistischer Parteien in Westeuropa*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Staten, Henry. 1984. *Wittgenstein and Derrida*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

statista. 2020. ‘Aus Welchen Medien Beziehen Sie Hauptsächlich Ihre Informationen Über Das Politische Geschehen?’ https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/661410/umfrage/hauptsaechliche-informationsquellen-ueber-das-politische-geschehen/ (September 12, 2022).

Stavrakakis, Yannis. 1999. *Lacan and the Political*. London: Routledge.

———. 2000. ‘Identity, Political’. In *Encyclopaedia of Democratic Thought*, eds. B. Clarke and J. Foweraker. London and New York: Routledge.

———. 2005. ‘Passions of Identification: Discourse, Enjoyment, and European Identity’. In *Discourse Theory in European Politics - Identity, Policy and Governance*, eds. David Howarth and Jacob Torfing. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Steinberg, Rudolf. 2018. *Zwischen Grundgesetz und Scharia: Der lange Weg des Islam nach Deutschland*. Frankfurt and New York: Campus Verlag.

Steinmetz, Rüdiger. 2016. ‘Television History in Germany: Media-Political and Media-Ethical Aspects’. In *German Television: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives*, eds. Larson Powell and Robert Shandley. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 133–54.

Stone, Deborah. 2012. ‘Numbers’. In *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*, New York: W.W. Norton & Co.

Stöss, Richard. 1989. *Die extreme Rechte in der Bundesrepublik: Entwicklung — Ursachen — Gegenmaßnahmen*. Wiesbaden: Springer-Verlag.

———. 1990. *Die ‘Republikaner’: Woher Sie Kommen, Was Sie Wollen, Wer Sie Wählt, Was Zu Tun Ist*. 2nd ed. Köln: Bund-Verlag.

———. 1995. ‘Bestimmungsfaktoren Des Rechtsextremismus’. In *Zwischen Wende Und Wiedervereinigung: Analysen Zur Politischen Kultur in West- Und Ost-Berlin 1990*, Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.

———. 2010. *Rechtsextremismus im Wandel*. 3rd ed. Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

Süddeutsche Zeitung. 2010. ‘Sarrazin Missachtet Die Leitkultur’. https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/streit-um-die-integration-sarrazin-missachtet-die-leitkultur-1.997255 (September 21, 2022).

———. 2011. ‘Feigheit Vor Dem Wort’. https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/debatte-um-thilo-sarrazin-feigheit-vor-dem-wort-1.996129 (September 20, 2022).

———. 2012. ‘Fünf Minus Eins’. https://www.sueddeutsche.de/medien/wdr-rundfunkrat-fordert-weniger-talkshows-fuenf-minus-eins-1.1334624 (September 12, 2022).

———. 2016a. ‘Entschuldigung’. https://www.sueddeutsche.de/kolumne/in-eigener-sache-entschuldigung-1.2812327 (September 21, 2022).

———. 2016b. ‘Psychologe: “Übrig Bleibt Das Macho-Gehabe”’. https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/interview-psychologe-uebrig-bleibt-das-macho-gehabe-1.2810369 (September 21, 2022).

———. 2017. ‘Herrmann Muss Zahl Der Sexuellen Übergriffe Konkretisieren’. https://www.sueddeutsche.de/bayern/zahlen-zu-sexuellen-uebergriffen-csu-um-schadensbegrenzung-nach-missgluecktem-wahlkampfmanoever-bemueht-1.3675051 (September 9, 2022).

Szkudlarek, Tomasz. 2011. ‘Semiotics of Identity: Politics and Education’. *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 30(2): 113–25.

tagesschau. 2019. ‘Verletzt - Aber Für Die Statistik Tot’. https://www.tagesschau.de/faktenfinder/inland/bka-lagebild-103.html (September 7, 2022).

———. 2021. ‘Forderung von Integrationsexperten - Begriff “Migrationshintergrund” Soll Weg’. https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/fachkommission-fordert-abschaffung-des-begriffs-migrationshintergrund-101.html (February 26, 2021).

Tagesspiegel. 2010. 'Gauck attestiert Sarrazin "Mut"' https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/gauck-attestiert-sarrazin-mut-7046071.html (April 4, 2023).

Tagesspiegel. 2016. ‘“Focus”-Chef Verteidigt Umstrittenes Cover:’ https://www.tagesspiegel.de/gesellschaft/medien/medien-diskussion-geht-weiter-wir-bilden-ab-was-leider-passiert-ist-3687946.html (September 21, 2022).

taz. 2017. ‘„Eine Zunehmende Verrohung“ - Statistik Zur Kriminalität in Deutschland’. https://taz.de/Statistik-zur-Kriminalitaet-in-Deutschland/!5399643/ (September 12, 2022).

Tenscher, Jens. 2002. ‘Talkshowisierung Als Element Moderner Politikvermittlung’. In *Talk Auf Allen Kanälen - Angebote, Akteure Und Nutzer von Fernsehgesprächssendungen*, eds. Jens Tenscher and Christian Schicha. Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag.

the Guardian. 2020. ‘Boycott Threats after AfD Fascist Stands for Thuringia Premier’. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/03/boycott-threats-after-afd-fascist-stands-for-thuringia-premier.

———. 2022. ‘Swedish Rightwing on Verge of Narrow Election Win but Waits on Final Tally’. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/12/swedish-rightwing-on-verge-of-narrow-election-win-but-waits-on-final-tally (September 14, 2022).

Therborn, Göran. 1980. *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology*. London and New York: Verso.

Tibi, Bassam. 1998. *Europa ohne Identität? Die Krise der multikulturellen Gesellschaft*. München: Bertelsmann.

———. 2017. ‘Leitkultur Als Integrationskonzept – Revisited’. https://www.bpb.de/politik/extremismus/islamismus/255521/leitkultur-als-integrationskonzept-revisited.

Tsianos, Vassilis, and Marianne Pieper. 2011. ‘Postliberale Assemblagen - Rassismus in Zeiten von Gleichheit’. In *Rassismus in Der Leistungsgesellschaft: Analysen Und Kritische Perspektiven Zu Den Rassistischen Normalisierungsprozessen Der ‘Sarrazindebatte’*, ed. Sebastian Friedrich. Münster: edition assemblage.

Wall Street Journal. 2016. ‘Germany’s Road to “No We Can’t” on Migrants’. http://www.wsj.com/articles/germanys-road-to-no-we-cant-on-migrants-1453147735 (September 21, 2022).

Walter, Stefanie. 2010. ‘Globalization and the Welfare State: Testing the Microfoundations of the Compensation Hypothesis’. *International Studies Quarterly* 54(2): 403–26.

Wanta, Wayne, Guy Golan, and Cheolhan Lee. 2004. ‘Agenda Setting and International News: Media Influence on Public Perceptions of Foreign Nations’. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 81(2): 364–77.

Washington Post. 2018. ‘Fact Checker: President Trump’s Claim That Crime Is up in Germany’. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2018/06/20/president-trumps-claim-that-crime-is-up-in-germany/ (September 12, 2022).

WDR n.D. ‘Der WDR-Rundfunkrat’. https://www1.wdr.de/unternehmen/rundfunkrat/ueber-uns-110.html (April 4, 2023).

WDR Rundfunkrat. 2015. ‘Stellungnahme Des WDR-Rundfunkrats Vom 22. Oktober 2015 in Köln Zu Talksendungen Im Ersten’. https://www1.wdr.de/unternehmen/rundfunkrat/talk_im_ersten100.pdf (July 1, 2022).

———. 2017. ‘Stellungnahme Des Programmausschusses Des WDR-Rundfunkrats Zu Den Talksendungen Des WDR Vom 10. November 2017’. https://www1.wdr.de/unternehmen/rundfunkrat/stellungnahme-talksendungen-100.pdf (July 1, 2022).

Weaver, David H. 2007. ‘Thoughts on Agenda Setting, Framing, and Priming’. *Journal of Communication* 57(1): 142–47.

Weber, Beverly. 2016. ‘“We Must Talk about Cologne”: Race, Gender, and Reconfigurations of “Europe”’. *German Politics and Society* 34(4): 68–86.

Weber, Oliver. 2019. *Talkshows hassen: Ein letztes Krisengespräch*. Stuttgart: Tropen.

Weisskircher, Manès. 2020. ‘The Strength of Far-Right AfD in Eastern Germany: The East-West Divide and the Multiple Causes behind “Populism”’. *The Political Quarterly* 91(3): 614–22.

WELT. 2016. ‘Minister Schmidt: Schweinefleisch Gehört Auf Speiseplan von Schulen’. *DIE WELT*. https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article153695146/Ernaehrungsminister-setzt-sich-fuer-Schweinefleisch-ein.html (October 10, 2020).

Wendekamm, Michaela, and Jana-Andrea Frommer. 2019. ‘Die Konstruktion von Migration Und Kultur - Über Deutungshoheit Im Sicherheitspolitischen Diskurs’. In *Postfaktische Sicherheitspolitik - Gewährleistung von Sicherheit in*

Unübersichtlichen Zeiten, eds. Hans-Jürgen Lange and Michaela Wendekamm. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Westle, Bettina, and Oskar Niedermayer. 1992. 'Contemporary Right-Wing Extremism in West Germany'. *European Journal of Political Research* 22(1): 83–100.

Wiermer, Christian, and Gerhard Voogt. 2016. *Die Nacht, Die Deutschland Veränderte - Hintergründe, Fakten Und Enthüllungen Zu Den Dramatischen Übergriffen Der Silvesternacht in Köln*. München: riva.

de Wilde, Pieter. 2013. 'Representative Claims Analysis: Theory Meets Method'. *Journal of European Public Policy* 20(2): 278–94.

Wiliarty, Sarah E. 2021. 'Germany: How the Christian Democrats Manage to Adapt to the Silent Counter-Revolution'. In *Riding the Populist Wave: Europe's Mainstream Right in Crisis*, eds. Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser and Tim Bale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 141–69.

Will, Anne-Kathrin. 2019. 'The German Statistical Category "Migration Background": Historical Roots, Revisions and Shortcomings'. *Ethnicities* 19(3): 535–57.

Windzio, Michael, and Matthias Kleimann. 2009. 'Criminal Society and Criminal Immigrants: A Social Construction of Reality by Mass Media?' In *Social Psychology of Punishment of Crime*, eds. Margit E. Oswald, Steffen Bieneck, and Jörg Hupfeld-Heinemann. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Windzio, Michael, Julia Simonson, Christian Pfeiffer, and Matthias Kleimann. 2007. *Kriminalitätswahrnehmung Und Punitivität in Der Bevölkerung - Welche Rolle Spielen Die Massenmedien?* Hannover: Kriminologisches Forschungsinstitut Niedersachsen.

Wintrobe, Ronald. 2002. 'Leadership and Passion in Extremist Politics'. In *Political Extremism and Rationality*, eds. Albert Breton, Gianluigi Galeotti, Pierre Salmon, and Ronald Wintrobe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Yanow, Dvora. 2003. *Constructing 'Race' and 'Ethnicity' in America: Category -Making in Public Policy and Administration*. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe.

Yılmaz, Ferruh. 2016. *How the Workers Became Muslims: Immigration, Culture, and Hegemonic Transformation in Europe*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Zicman de Barros, Thomás. 2017. 'Demands for "Radical Democracy": Constructing "The People" Beyond Representative Claims'. In Oslo.

———. 2021. 'Desire and Collective Identities: Decomposing Ernesto Laclau's Notion of Demand'. *Constellations* 28(4).

Zienkowski, Jan. 2017. *Articulations of Self and Politics in Activist Discourse: A Discourse Analysis of Critical Subjectivities in Minority Debates*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Zimmermann, Ekkart, and Thomas Saalfeld. 1993. ‘The Three Waves of West German Right-Wing Extremism’. In *Encounters with the Contemporary Radical Right*, eds. Peter H. Merkl and Leonard Weinberg. Boulder: Westview Press.

Žižek, Slavoj. 1990. ‘Eastern Europe’s Republics of Gilead’. *New Left Review* (I/183).

———. 1994. ‘The Spectre of Ideology’. In *Mapping Ideology*, London and New York: Verso.

———. 1997. *The Plague of Fantasies*. London and New York: Verso.

———. 1998. ‘The Seven Veils of Fantasy’. In *Key Concepts of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, ed. Dany Nobus. New York: Other Press.

———. 2008a. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. London and New York: Verso.

———. 2008b. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*. London and New York: Verso.

Zubayr, Camille, and Heinz Gerhard. 2017. ‘Tendenzen Im Zuschauerverhalten - Fernsehgewohnheiten Und Fernsehreichweiten Im Jahr 2016’. *Media Perspektiven* 3.