

# Summer School

## “Political Masculinities in Europe: New Definitions, Methods and Approaches”

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The summer school “Political Masculinities in Europe: New Definitions, Methods and Approaches” took place from August 20th to 24th 2018, at the Landau Campus of the University of Koblenz-Landau in Germany. It was organised by Kathleen Starck (University of Koblenz-Landau) and Birgit Sauer (University of Vienna) and funded by the Volkswagen Stiftung.

We welcomed a group of fifteen Early Career Researchers, who are currently pursuing PhD-dissertations or postdoc research connected with the concept of *political masculinities* to participate in a large variety of teaching and discussion formats such as set-classes, workshop-sessions, peer- and keynote-tutoring, a round-table discussion as well as a joint lecture and a number of keynote

lectures. The group proved diverse and international, coming from Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Netherlands, Serbia, Slovakia, Sweden and Turkey. The keynote speakers, who also functioned as tutors to the researchers, were as international as the participants: Jeff Hearn (Örebro University, Sweden), Marina Hughson (Institute for Criminological and Sociological Research, Belgrade, Serbia), Ov Cristian Norocel (Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium) and Niels Spierings (Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands).

The first basic term to be discussed was *masculinities*: it was addressed by Jeff Hearn in his opening keynote-lecture. Since both terms *masculinities* and *political* are heavily loaded, Hearn suggested to scrutinise these through a ‘material discursive analysis’, i.e. an analysis of the potential differentials and the processes of constructedness that simultaneously underpin them. Much of this work was new, with initial steps undertaken in Hearn’s seminal studies *The Gender of Oppression* (1987) and *Men in the Public Eye* (1992). The resulting six categories Hearn suggested promise to be helpful for reframing the term *masculinities* as originally defined by Starck and Sauer (2014) and also for engaging with the more recent modification of the definition by Starck and Russel Luyt (2018). Thus, the participants were able

to witness and actively contribute to the development of a new theoretical concept in the making as well as test its merits by applying it to their own work.

A second important issue to be addressed were the different methodologies that are used in the analysis of *political masculinities*. The international group of Early Career Researchers – coming from ten countries and nine academic disciplines – presented a living example of the interdisciplinary potential of this varied field: methodologies from political sciences, sociology, psychology to cultural-, literary- and film- and drama studies, etc. found their way into the discussion. But this fruitful mix of perspectives also highlighted the necessity of an overarching definition of what may constitute *political masculinities*.

In his lecture (read in absentia) Niels Spierings proposed an empirical approach in order to analyse voters’ inclination to lean towards right-wing parties. At the centre of his paper stood the evidence-based hypothesis that the attraction for voters of the parties forming the Populist Radical Right (PRR) can be explained by a mixture of ideology and a leadership framed as ‘*politically masculine*’, though it is not limited to men. The clarity and validity of the empirical data presented in Spierings’s paper also raised the question of the applicability of the term *political*

*masculinities* across countries, cultures and mentalities, which sparked a lively discussion among the international group.

Taking up the thread from both Hearn's and Spierings's observations, Ov Cristian Norocel first proposed to identify the 'political players' mentioned in the working definition of *political masculinities* before zooming in on these with regard to right wing populism. Then Norocel applied the analysis of conceptual metaphors in order to illustrate the ideological tenets in right-wing populism and the never-neutral implicit power relations. Perceiving these relations from an intersectional perspective exposes the differences and inequality on the basis of gender, ethnicity, class, race and sexual orientation found in the right wing portrayal of institutionalised categories such as 'families'. As Norocel showed, reframing the nation as a 'family' metaphorically clouds acts of exclusion on the grounds of gender, race, sexual orientation, etc. This opened the possibility of ascribing also to language the role of a potential 'political player'.

Marina Hughson highlighted a problematic methodological pattern, questioning the nature of both interdisciplinary and intersectional approaches. She pointed to the operational differences in the production of knowledge in established Western core theories and in non-core knowledge

in East, Central and Southeast Europe, further suggesting that knowledge from the 'semiperiphery' should not be essentialised but empirically tested. Knowledge-production, then, appears as a construct similar to culture and as such impacts the formation of theories surrounding *masculinity*. This proved a particularly successful and new approach to cross-cultural comparisons in the application of *political masculinities*, as the animated input of the research group showed.

The keynote lectures were combined with varied teaching formats, which also produced valuable insights. During a session led by Birgit Sauer and starting from an analysis of Eva Kreisky's "Masculinity as an Analytical Category: Work in Progress" (2014), the participants examined her initial observations on *Männerbund* and *masculinism* in order to theorise *political masculinities* in a wider context. In her essay, Kreisky utilises political categories from the beginning of the 20th century to form current strategies for political science. She introduces three dimensions of masculinity as analytical categories: *masculinity*, *Männerbund* and *masculinism*. In the following discussion, the participants found that *masculinism* could be a useful concept for empirical studies with a view to identifying it as a symptom of a wider structure. The term *homosociality* was found to be more widely

applicable than Kreisky's *Männerbund* – or *male bonding* – as the former also includes the competition between men, whereas the latter exemplifies an institution. While *homosociality* denotes a more spontaneous grouping, *male bonding* tends to be more organised.

A workshop-session led by Starck and Sauer focused on the visual (self) representation of Austrian right-wing politicians and their appropriation of Hip-Hop music. In their analysis of two videos the group differentiated between various portrayals of charisma and their role in the construction of political masculinity. Other workshops moderated by the keynote speakers focused on the many overlapping spheres and sites of political power. In smaller groups and poster sessions the international research group worked on aspects of politics of the everyday and different spheres of social life (environment, militarism, health, economic development, intersectionality, etc.), the incommensurability of the political domain as a fragmented site and the framed gender of political actors. This last point led back to the discussion of methodology, as the researchers' posters highlighted the role of texts and theories as potential 'political players' in their own right. The different cultural perspectives of the research group proved particularly stimulating in these sessions.

During a joint lecture given by the organisers and keynote lecturers,

various local and global phenomena of political masculinities were analysed. Birgit Sauer showcased the visual self-image of the Austrian populist right-wing, while Marina Hughson introduced historical changes of political visions from the former Yugoslavian society to its post-war state. Kathleen Starck emphasised a global view on political masculinity by examining cinematic cold war propaganda. Jeff Hearn again stressed the importance of the role of *homosociality* for the concept of *political masculinities*, which – as had previously been pointed out by Hughson – is a concept and not (yet) a closed theoretical approach in itself.

The summer school "Political Masculinities in Europe: New Definitions, Methods and Approaches" proved to be a great success, which was reflected in the concluding poster-session, during which the participants evaluated the overall performance, structure and concept of the event. They especially appreciated the large range of formats and teaching methods of the summer school. In order to consolidate the various results, all lectures, the round table discussion, the joint lecture, as well as impressions of the workshops and tutoring sessions were filmed and made available through the summer school's website, which is now part of the Political Masculinities Network.

The summer school helped to solidify aspects of *political masculinities* while opening the concept to necessary modifications of the initial definition and its methodological approaches. This showed, that while the event was a success it is still but a stepping stone to an understanding of the global currents and power structures in their (mostly) masculine framings. We can only encourage the organisation of further events on the topic as well as the exploration of synergies through the research network “Political Masculinities” which could help to sustainably facilitate an international and intersectional view on *political masculinities*.

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