The Necessity of Intersectional Perspectives and Intersectional Solidarity to Counter the Rise of the Far Right

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The far right on the rise

The far right in Europe and beyond is on the rise. The signs of this rise are visible to all and are only getting more and more visible. Nonetheless, there have been incidents that seemingly stood against this trend, moments of hope, at least for some, but too often just situations of 'it could have been worse.' And it is necessary to take these moments and tendencies into account, not the least to get empowered and energized. This can be more votes for a certain party in an election or the far right not winning, maybe even some political forces from the political right not winning with far-right rhetorics. Even though this may give hope, it does not neglect the overall tendency and development. These circumstances more visibly accelerated in 2024. And just for the purpose of an example most may be able to grasp easily, it makes sense to visualize this by looking beyond Europe and at the USA. In November 2024, the world saw the victory of Donald Trump, after an election campaign that, more clearly and obviously than other campaigns before in the last decades, was built on racism, sexism, classism, and ableism. Do not get me wrong – Donald Trump always was a misogynist, always was a racist and classist, and never hid this (Robson, 2020). However, in the 2024 electoral campaign, these characteristics became more of a cornerstone, an argument to vote for Donald Trump, not despite these characteristics. Voters could not vote for Donald Trump anymore despite being a misogynist racist, as some at least tried to rationalize after the last success in 2016, but seemingly because he is a misogynist racist (Bump, 2024; Lempinen et al., 2024). This came as a shock to many, but at the same time, protests against the victory, and in the first months of 2025 against the new policies by Donald Trump, remained at least relatively weak (Allsop, 2025). Some clearly remain shocked and afraid, but at least as many, seemingly many more, just explain(ed) away, shrug(ed) their shoulders and go/went on. This allows asking if this is the so often called for 'new normal.' Is racist misogyny the 'new normal'? Is this the end of fights against intersectional privileges

and discrimination? I argue here: Not at all. Instead, these developments make it even more necessary to work against all forms of discrimination and to counter the rising far right. This is no easy task to achieve, nor is it a safe or secure path. However, it is essential not to neglect recent developments, but to actively work against them. To achieve this, interventions grounded in solidarity are absolutely necessary – guided by an intersectional perspective and a firm commitment to collective well-being. Before getting into the details of intersectionality, it is important to first consider the necessary interventions to counter the far right – examining its components and interconnections – to formulate a genuinely intersectional intervention.

An intersectional intervention is an intervention based on analysis and clear communication

For any form of commitment and intersectional solidarity, it is necessary to understand what we are confronting. Such commitment is based on a clear and differentiated analysis. Extremism of the far right is no uniform phenomenon. This diversity, going as far as contradictions within the connected phenomenon, is enriched with problematic terminologies: Shouldn't we call the phenomenon and its actors 'right-wing populism?' What is 'right' and what is 'far right' or even 'far-right extremism?' Depending on the choices regarding description and terminology, the phenomenon we are confronted with is discussed differently in various contexts (Pirro, 2022, p. 101ff.). The best fitting term, however, to cover all diversity is the writing of the far right. This challenge in analysis can be exemplified by looking at Donald Trump once again. Latest from 2024 onwards it was discussed if Donald Trump is to be called a 'fascist' or not. This question has often been addressed in overly simplistic terms, with responses such as: 'Donald Trump is not Benito Mussolini,' or in a different historical framing, 'He is not Adolf Hitler' (as argued in Moritz, 2025). Another rhetorical strategy used to reject the applicability of the term 'fascist' to Donald Trump involves emphasizing that his movement does not represent 'original' Italian fascism (Drabek, 2024). From this premise, the conclusion is drawn that Trump cannot be considered a fascist. Arguing this way is nothing better than trivializing far-right extremism as just another form of 'populism.' There are scientific definitions of fascism, and there are indicators of what makes one person or a party fascist. For sure, they are debated and not universal, but still, they try to fix the phenomenon. Drawing on what is perhaps the most well-known definition by Stanley G. Payne, fascism consists of specific goals – such as the establishment of a nationalist dictatorship – distinct negations of, notably, communism and liberalism, and a particular political style marked by the promotion of masculinity and charismatic leadership (Payne, 1983). Taking this as a trial for the question of Donald Trump being fascist, there are good arguments to call Donald Trump a fascist. More so, failing to engage critically

with Trumpism and writing it off as merely a new form of conservatism – perhaps even an 'authoritarian' variant or a form of 'radicalized conservatism' (Strobl, 2021) personified by Donald Trump – risks once again trivializing his rhetoric and positions, or failing to take them seriously. This does not mean it is not relevant, and necessary, to discuss if the US-Republicans are now only 'Trumpists' and if nowadays 'Trumpism' is a form of fascism (Goldberg, 2020). Engaging in this discussion is essential. However, such engagement should not involve obscuring evident fascist tendencies just to be on the 'safe side,' nor should it rely on artificial distinctions between rhetoric and actions as a kind of preemptive defense – particularly one that exempts figures like Donald Trump, the white and male-read, from accountability for their statements and potential conduct. While it remains debatable if the concept of fascism fully applies to Donald Trump and Trumpism, outright dismissal of the term hinders a meaningful understanding and effective confrontation of the phenomenon. For this, a thorough and critical analysis is needed.

But this is by far not the only area or question requiring analysis. It is equally important to identify fitting concepts and terminologies. At the same time, and closely intertwined with the discussion of terminologies and concepts, it is essential to critically analyze the statements, actions, and demands associated with the phenomenon in question. The far right and far-right extremist parties and their actors are notorious liars (Törnberg & Chueri, 2025, p. 01ff.). This holds true for Donald Trump, despite repeated attempts to camouflage falsehoods as so-called 'alternative facts' (Atolagbe, 2017, p. 119ff.), but for many far-right parties, too. Thus, analyzing lies is key for any serious form of political and scholarly commitment. As discussed in more detail later in this book, this also applies, to the actions of the German far-right party 'Alternative für Deutschland / AfD.' A close examination of the AfD's argumentation reveals incomplete reasoning, hatred and plain lies. Based on such an analysis, one can critically compare the party's stated goals and core demands with their actual political program. A major finding – probably not surprising to most readers of this text – is this: many of those voting for the far-right AfD would not profit from its program but would, in fact, suffer cuts and increased hardship (Deutschland Solidarisch Gestalten, 2025). And, to close the circle once again to developments in the USA: lower- to middle-class Black male-read voters of Donald Trump may try to overlook Donald Trump's racism, but they certainly do stand to benefit from his policies. Such belief is a form of self-deception (Sanders, 2024). Identifying far-right policies as often fundamentally neoliberal, both in Germany and the US is, therefore, a key task of any analysis.

And from analyzing lies or far-right ideas and policies, there follows a necessary next step: communication. Science needs to communicate its results, activists, or journalists, at least as much. This communication is already a form of commitment. At the same time, this means addressing the power and influence of so-called 'alternative facts.' A need that has to recognize the growing presence of 'alternative media'

as more or less closed 'information' circles leaning towards the far right or even far-right extremism (Cowburn & Knüpfer, 2023, p. 319ff.). Studies show that traditional news channels, such as newspapers or TV news, are losing reach and influence, in comparison to before, though they remain far from irrelevant. Instead, alternative media outlets are gaining ground, often circulating a different kind of 'truth' – at best, a different perspective, but all too often, plain lies (Lipka & Shearer, 2023). Once again, the difference between both media spheres can be exemplified by looking at the USA. One can consult 'classical' media outlets like 'The New York Times' or 'CNN' to stay informed about the USA. However, those who lean in a different political direction often rely on other sources, such as 'Breitbart News' or 'Fox News.' Studies have shown how the consumption of different media and news channels defines and constructs different realities (Wang et al., 2024, p. 708ff.). Increasingly, these are actively insulated from each other. One can draw a direct line from users of platforms like 'Truth Social' to voters of Donald Trump, linking the narratives and policies they prefer. This phenomenon is not limited to the USA, even as the US provides a particularly good example here. Curiously, these media-aligned groups often see themselves as informed–and even particularly well-informed (this self-perception has been studied, e.g., in relation to COVID-19 information, see Lee et al., 2023, p. 1730ff.). This leads to the challenge that communication becomes ever more complicated especially when even basic facts are disputed. It becomes harder to reach and inform those who do not rely on the same media sources. What counts as fantasy and what is considered as reported 'reality' is not necessarily common ground. Perceptions of the world, at least in part or in tendency, drift apart, sometimes even becoming polar opposites. While it is vital to identify and expose lies in far-right narratives, this effort remains limited if it does not reach out to the supporters and potential voters of such movements to explain what the lies are and why these are lies. Communication, then, becomes not only essential – but also challenging work. And this can include a necessity for compromises, such as language-wise reducing gender-sensitive language or using problematic or debatable terms for collectives without criticizing them from the beginning. Further, it can include the need to use media outlets otherwise criticized or ignored to reach out. Many stay on and continued to use 'X' (formerly 'Twitter') despite seeing all the challenges linked to it; they stay to keep in touch, to be informed, but to reach out, too (Robertson, 2024). In this context, transformations of media outlets are another challenge, be it 'Twitter' becoming 'X' or 'The Washington Post' changing its opinion section direction-wise. Just ignoring the media or the change does not work here if it is about (out)reach, communication and communication as commitment against the far right. Working on and about far-right extremism always involves not only communicating about it but also, at least occasionally, communicating with actors and individuals linked to the far right. This does not necessarily mean everyone has to talk to the constructed 'fascist next door,' (Thielman, 2019) or to people like Donald Trump, if there is any

chance to do so. Instead, it means trying to communicate, at least if the possibilities exist, with voters and supporters who might be open to changing their positions, doing so in a way and to the extent that feels personally appropriate. This is a major task of commitment against the far right. And this attempt at communication then is a kind of intervention, just as a clear analysis may also be considered as an act of intervention.

This commitment based on analysis and communication can take many forms. It may be political or civic education, campaigning, investigation or scientific communication. Attending the next demonstration, starting a petition or countering far-right trolls on social media – all these activities are potential forms of intervention and commitment. Taking this as a starting ground, it is overall about an intervention together in difference and diversity – an intervention rooted in plurality and in a form of polylogue (Wimmer, 2004). This act of intervening together and in dialogue or polylogue is a form of shared responsibility in countering the rise of the far right, not only in the USA but globally. There are many forms such interventions can take, including simply speaking up in a specific situation, and they are neither wrong nor problematic as such. However, intervention for its own sake remains ineffective. And internal conflicts over details will weaken the impact of the broader intervention against far-right actors and policies, too. This is not to argue against or even prevent controversial or fruitful debate, nor to dismiss differing opinions or perspectives. On the contrary – such debates are necessary; they are of great value and represent a chance for change. Rather, the point is not to work against one another while sharing common ground. It is ultimately a question of focus and solidarity. To allow for this, it is essential to see, recognize and value difference, and not in service of preserving the status quo, but for positive change. In a sense, this follows the idea of "El pueblo unido jamás será vencido" – 'The people united will never be defeated' (Wandler & Meiners, 2016). Yes, this may sound like a simplistic ideal, which has been used before to obscure internal forms of discrimination. Chile under Allende, where this chant became popular, may have represented a socialist experiment, but it was still, inter alia, a very sexist and racist place (Farías, 2005).[1] It is necessary to ask who are 'the people' here, and how meaningful is unity if injustice is not fought in all areas.

Yet, by maintaining an open and inclusive concept of 'the people' and using this basic idea as a start and guide, it becomes possible to channel it into a broader fight against all forms of discrimination, and ultimately into a sustained intervention and commitment against the far right. Because there is more than a grain of truth in

1 However, this does not at all mean Salvador Allende as a person was more racist than all white people in white-dominated societies have at least racist tendencies. Clearly different positions, as by Farias (2005) claiming Allende to be specially racist and antisemitic, do not hold.

this simple message. There are many historical examples where the united fight was weakened by internal divide, with groups turning against each other over details rather than building on common ground. A good example can be found in Germany during the 1970s when left-wing politics and activism lost momentum to infighting over the 'right way to be leftist.' Similarly, struggles between competing communist groups, the so-called '*K-Gruppen Auseinandersetzungen*,' (with K standing for *Kommunismus*, or communism), fragmented, rather than strengthened the movement (Benicke, 2019). A meaningful intervention does not require a homogenized, 'united people' that ignores all difference, but it also cannot be driven solely by subjective, personal perspectives. The latter only opens up doors for a more united and organized far right. The 2024 U.S. elections, for example, revealed a very well-organized and strategically united political right, focused on opposing liberal rights, equality and concepts such as intersectionality. In contrast, those leaning to the Democratic side appeared divided, fighting inter alia about questions that their right-wing opponents easily framed as 'identity politics' (Coopman, 2024; Previous studies on the 2020 elections already challenged the simplistic idea that 'the left' is being divided by 'identity' as: Gin, 2021). However, presenting and positioning one's own subjective position as the only valid one, and the resulting divisions, undermines collective interventions against the far right. What is needed instead, is acknowledging that there are different ways of intervention: not everyone writes books, not everyone is made for demonstrations. Yet, solidarity in action – across these differences – is essential to building a successful and sustainable opposition to the far right. Crucially, this solidarity must be grounded in an intersectional perspective to avoid the perpetuation of the same discriminatory patterns it is seeking to dismantle. To better understand this claim, a closer examination of intersectionality as a theory and concept is necessary.

Intersectionality – the history

Worlds, societies or dynamics are shaped and permeated by power. But power is never distributed equally. Access to power, for example, is distributed extremely unevenly. Those with power typically strive to maintain it. Privileges, such as exclusive access to resources, secured property rights, or dominant positions in society play a crucial role in maintaining imbalances. These privileges also include the ability to define social norms. Those excluded from such privileges, who are often constructed as 'others,' experience this exclusion, among other things, in the form of oppression or discrimination. This inequality is secured in systems and structures, for example through mechanisms of divide and rule/conquer, making experiences comparable. But concrete and specific spatial or historical contexts tend to lead to changes within these systems and structures (Deflers & Muschalek, 2022, p. 5ff.). Experiences of

inequality are a human constant. Systemic and structural inequalities position all people along different axes and constructed categories. One example of this is the gender binary separation. This is a powerful process through which positions and norms are imposed rather than freely chosen. This shapes identities, collectively as well as individually, and is experienced as rule by others. In contrast, systemic privileges are often not consciously recognized. The systemic and structural power associated with being socially constructed as a 'man' is therefore repeatedly overlooked. More so, one's own privileged position is perceived as justified, as right or deserved. In simplified terms, one's own privilege is considered 'normal' – as the default state of being. And from this, it too often follows 'logically' that the non-privileged status of the 'others' is their own 'fault.' This can even lead to a complete denial of the existing inequality itself, for example, by pointing out one's own perceived disadvantages or claim a lack of privilege even while benefiting from structural and systemic advantages. This dynamic has been particularly explored, for example, in relation to white privilege and the negation of racism as captured in the concept of "white fragility" (DiAngelo, 2018). Accordingly, systemic and structural inequality, which manifests as discrimination, is repeatedly trivialized, treated as isolated incidents, or dismissed as overreactions or 'hypersensitivity.' But what is not acknowledged cannot be confronted or changed – so discrimination persists.

This phenomenon is neither new nor unexplored. In fact, multiple forms of discrimination and privilege have been identified, and various conceptual frameworks have been developed for their analysis. However, research has repeatedly shown that adopting discriminatory concepts and terms uncritically can be problematic for overcoming the very inequalities they aim to address. At the same time, avoiding these issues leads to the obscuration of corresponding problems. The concept of a 'strategic essentialism' by Gayatri Spivak, which was first put forward in 1984 and then further expanded and differentiated over the years, argued – as a kind of 'solution' to this challenge – for a strategic use of these discriminating concepts. Spivak herself eventually distanced herself from the term, but not from the goal associated with it (Spivak, 2008, p. 260). In line with this concept, Spivak advocated for the targeted use of categories to be able to name and thus challenge power-coded attributions and positionalities. The aim behind this strategy is to enable the appropriation of terms and concepts as empowerment. Reclaimed in this way, such categories can foster resistance and resilience, instead of serving to reproduce inequality (Kurzwelly et al., 2020, p. 65ff.). Intersectionality, both as a concept and strategy, is also based on precisely this.

Historically, the idea of intersectionality emerged from Black feminism, rooted in the fight against both sexism and racism. This concept always included other dimensions, such as classism, but it initially focused on confronting sexism and racism, driven by the realization that mainstream feminism had a *white* agenda, while existing anti-racist movements often lacked a gendered perspective. The

Black civil rights movement was deeply patriarchal, and so constructed women were confronted with the expectation that so-called 'feminist interests' would have to take a back seat to the fight against racism. Black voices were present throughout the feminist struggle, but they were a minority and often pressured to subordinate themselves to the predominantly *white* 'feminist agenda' (Chapman, 2019). The Nigerian feminist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie later summarized this emphasis on only one axis of discrimination as "The danger of a single story" (Adichie, 2009), a characteristic of many social movements or even liberation theories. A dedicated theorization of this gained significance and visibility from the 1970s onwards. This often followed the concept of 'triple oppression,' bringing together racism, sexism and classism. Fundamental to this was the work of the Combahee River Collective, which saw itself as a group of Black lesbian feminists. The joint 'Combahee River Collective Statement' of 1977 was foundational in this context, underlining the unique position and challenges faced by Black women*, while also adopting an anti-capitalist and socialist stance. According to the statement, any policy aimed at combatting discrimination must be based primarily on the specific lived experiences of those affected, a principle associated with the term 'identity politics.' This statement became a cornerstone for a wide range of social movements (Taylor, 2017).

Intersectionality – the basics

Building on these foundations, legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw published the seminal "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex" in 1989. In this article, Crenshaw discussed the inadequacies of US anti-discrimination regulations in prohibiting racism and sexism. She referred to the 1976 lawsuit DeGraffenreid v. General Motors, which was dismissed because General Motors employed Black people and women* and by doing so, according to the court, did not discriminate against Black women*. However, as Crenshaw points out, these were Black so constructed men* and *white* so constructed women*, while Black so constructed women* were the last to be hired and the first to be fired. Crenshaw introduced the term intersectionality in this article to describe the unique situation of Black women*, who are positioned at the intersection of different levels of discrimination, which do not simply add up, but rather converge to create a distinct and unique experience of marginalization. Referencing the idea of an intersection, intersectionality is a prism through which to look at the exact point where, depending on the individual constellation, racism, sexism, classism or else overlap, thus acting simultaneously by merging and influencing each other (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 139ff.). This image was not completely new. Crenshaw, for example, built on Evelyn Nakano Glenn and her 1985 article (p. 86ff.). Nevertheless, Crenshaw's 1989 article added greater nuance and analytical depth to this conceptual image. And while the idea of intersectionality was introduced in

1989, it was initially constructed in a very case-specific way. So, soon after, Crenshaw developed it into a more systematic framework and applied it to different contexts. Crenshaw's 1991 article "Mapping the Margins" is considered the basis of intersectionality as a comprehensive theory and concept. From the outset, intersectionality was designed as an interdisciplinary approach and has been understood in a transdisciplinary manner – establishing a clear connection between science and, for example, social movements, activism and other forms of intervention (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1241ff.). This basis was quickly taken up, expanded, and further concretized and critically discussed.

Crenshaw's worked out prism, initially presented and discussed in relation to Black women* of a constructable working class, was quickly adopted and applied to other examples and levels of analysis. This marked an expansion beyond the U.S. context and a broadening of disciplinary boundaries. While Crenshaw's arguments were primarily rooted in legal analysis, other disciplines soon began to use intersectionality as a prism for case analysis. This clearly followed Crenshaw's approach that was inherently interdisciplinary and drew from various disciplines and research fields, particularly from sociological and social science research, for example on Black feminist thought (Hill Collins, 1986, p. S14ff.). Some of the researchers whose work Crenshaw built upon were also among the earliest adapters of intersectionality as a concept. In principle, the adoption of intersectionality as a concept initially followed a critical approach that argued for pointing out and challenging power relations through critical analysis. This was combined with other approaches of the 1980s, such as coming from the margins to the center, both in analysis and in activism, as well as the societal and the global margins (hooks, 1984). As a result, intersectional approaches also necessitated a critical examination of the situatedness of knowledge, an idea that was developed within feminist perspectives by Donna Haraway in the late 1980s. The relationship between privilege, power, and knowledge, has remained a central concern of intersectional approaches. Thus considered, a critical examination of situated knowledge offers a means to draw conclusions about power relations, structures of privilege and mechanisms of discrimination (Haraway, 1988, p. 57ff.).

Intersectionality – central developments

Overall, the 1990s and early 2000s saw a gradual increase in the adaptation and adoption of intersectionality as a concept and analytical framework. Above all, this meant an increasing integration of different power structures into intersectionality theory. While this meant taking axes of power such as age or ability equally into account, others insisted that any intersectional analysis must continue to center racism, sexism and classism while allowing for shifting emphases. This was par-

ticularly underscored with regard to classism, which was initially considered and discussed in Crenshaw's early texts on intersectionality but received comparatively less attention than sexism and racism. Various researchers emphasized the centrality of classism alongside racism and sexism, thus reinforcing intersectionality's potential as a comprehensive lens for examining power relations and inequality (Ait Belkhir & McNair Barnett, 2001, p. 157ff.). However, scholars also highlighted the fact that there are important differences in how power relations operate across various axes and locations, whether in terms of the connections between sexism and racism and thus solidarity in Black feminism, or whether one focuses on how the different axes of power affect one individual, as a Black woman*. Leslie McCall set out to systematize these intersections while problematizing the very construction and use of corresponding categories per se. McCall's article "The Complexity of Intersectionality" (2005, p. 1771ff.) is still considered the basis for establishing a distinction between intracategorical, intercategorical and acategorical intersectionality. At the latest at the time of this article, it has become increasingly common – and necessary – for researchers to interrogate their own positionality within intersectional inquiry. This ongoing discourse constantly oscillates between the power-critical need to deconstruct and transcend fixed categories, and the necessity of strategically naming and applying them in order to reveal the normalizing and marginalizing effects of categorization itself – ultimately, to overcome them. These developments have expanded the analytical lens not only towards recognizing and challenging inequality and discrimination, but also toward revealing privilege as an often more invisible counterpart in power relations.

At the same time, it was and remains necessary to distinguish intersectionality from other perspectives and approaches that address inequality, privilege and discrimination, such as the theory of multiple discriminations. Intersectionality is not merely the description of the sum of different axes of discrimination and privilege; rather, it captures a specific character, a specific situatedness that results from the interactions and overlaps of these axes. Just as a Black woman* is not simply Black and a woman* in an additive sense, from the intersectional perspective that takes the overlapping layers of power and positionality into account, but is a Black woman*. This perspective has also been applied, for example, to the experiences of older people who are not able-bodied. To adequately analyze such complexities, it is important to always consider and analytically engage with privilege alongside discrimination(s). Consequently, intersectionality is not limited to the intervention against class-based racist sexism or sexist racism through analysis and communication, but it also demands solidarity between the positions of power and powerlessness. Intersectionality brings up the need for *white* women* and their feminisms to also fight against *white* supremacy, and for Black men* to actively oppose all layers of patriarchal heteronormativity. To underscore this and to safeguard such solidarity as the core of intersectionality, it became essential to develop an intersectional method-

ology and a clearly defined theoretical framework to better bridge empiricism and theory. Jennifer C. Nash emphasized a corresponding necessity in 2008 (p. 1ff.). By 2013, a good 20 years after intersectionality was introduced as a concept, and as a prism or analytical lens, it had been consolidated as a distinct theory and field of research. This was marked by a joint article by Crenshaw, McCall and Sumi Cho, which compiled various intersectional approaches and introduced 'intersectionality studies' as a research domain. The article, "Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies: Theory, Applications, and Praxis" (p. 785ff.), is considered groundbreaking and fundamental in this regard. This also meant countering misinterpretations of intersectionality that narrowed it down, for example, to being primarily or only applicable to Black women*, and resisting notions of equality that claimed to be 'neutral,' 'color-blind' or 'gender-blind' – approaches that, in fact, helped to produce and reinforce intersectional inequalities. In this regard, it has been and continues to be emphasized that intersectionality as a concept and a theory is not just another inequality theory, but a comprehensive approach. On the one hand, this involves highlighting its activist-practical orientation; on the other, it underscores the added value of using intersectionality to determine and demonstrate the complex overlaps of axes of power and specific concretizations on a small and structurally large scale. The importance of intersectionality in the fight for social justice through solidarity has been repeatedly emphasized, including by Anne Sisson Runyan 2018 (p. 10ff.) in an introduction and overview. As a categorical theory that works both intra- and inter-, and to some extent a-categorically, intersectionality has evolved through an ongoing cycle: observing and analyzing the complexities of power-coded social orders; communicating these insights; and designing and questioning modes of intervention aimed at shaping transformation. Ultimately, intersectionality is not only a theory but also a practice – one that is grounded in a dynamic understanding of its theoretical foundation, and enables a deep engagement with the complexity of the matter. At its core, intersectionality emphasizes and provides the insight that social positions, identities and categorizations are not isolated; rather, they are powerfully interconnected. At the same time, they are the structural and systemic evidence of the intersectionality of power and inequality. Intersectionality is a nuanced and comprehensive approach to critical social analysis and related activism, creating a deep understanding of how different forms of identity and oppression intersect to shape the lives of individuals in an increasingly globalized world. This also includes a degree of appropriation, as the concept – originally rooted in Black feminism – has been and continues to be a broad theory that is also applied by *white* people. While this is, of the context of complex analysis, often unavoidable and at times even welcomed, it nevertheless requires critical reflection on these circumstances and a sustained awareness of the origins of the theory and one's own positionality, in order to prevent whitewashing and uncritical appropriation (Arndt et al., 2025, p. 15ff.). Such reflection is essential for any genuine approach to intersectional solidarity aimed at

countering the far right. Before turning to the specifics of intersectional solidarity, however, it is necessary to first outline some basics concepts of solidarity itself.

Solidarity

In general, solidarity is based on a consciousness of shared interests and objectives, closely related to ideas of basic human rights. Solidarity is based on the idea of universality – the belief that all human beings are equal, share fundamental needs, and are inherently vulnerable. Instead of emphasizing everyone as special – albeit without neglecting individuality and intersectional vulnerability in difference – the baseline of solidaric action is acknowledging universal rights and needs (Boehm, 2022). However, unlike human rights, solidarity is not fixed; it is more of a foundational concept that views society as composed of individuals who share certain basic interests. Accordingly, the focus lies in the ties binding society or groups, without neglecting their differences. At the same time, historically – and even today – solidarity is often invoked in ways that overlook these same differences. As already mentioned, for instance – in the feminist fight neglecting issues of racism, or anti-racist struggles that have overlooked sexism. In this sense solidarity can emphasize a specific form of equality, especially in terms of shared needs, along a single axis. In this way, solidarity at times serves the interests of unions or is a basis for the welfare state, stressing shared interests, such as better wages or universal social security, while frequently overlooking other equally important issues and questions (Taylor, 2014). Analytically, this can be viewed in a more critical light, as a reluctance to acknowledge additional hardships or differences within the very group for whom solidarity is claimed, or expected from. A more positive perspective follows the idea of the ability to learn and adapt, such as unions moving beyond advocating for equal pay raises for all, but considering the unique challenges faced by certain groups – such as those doing care work, or those in the lowest paid positions. Such evolution shows that solidarity is an open and flexible concept, yet one that fundamentally relies on the need to recognize others as equals, at least in some essential way. It is also a term that must continually be questioned and redefined (Koltan, 2016, p. 133ff.).

Solidarity and the far right

As a concept, solidarity is often used to define the struggles of one group against another. While this is not the only way the concept can be understood, this is the idea that is frequently propagated – for example, in workers' struggles against employers or in slogans like "*El pueblo unido jamás será vencido*." Because far-right parties and actors tend to oppose redistributive policies, and generally align with economically

right-wing positions, the idea of solidarity is frequently mobilized against them. Along the same lines, trade unions in Germany mobilized against the far-right party 'Alternative für Deutschland' during the federal elections in early 2025. The basic rationale followed is that fascism runs counter to the interests of workers. On a deeper level, it is about questioning the social policies propagated by the far right (International Trade Union Confederation, 2025). This is necessary because the simplistic dichotomy of 'us – the workers' – versus 'them – the far-right-bourgeoisie' – is no longer sufficient. Instead, studies show that the far right drastically changed its approach to social policy: It now promotes a new, right-wing version of solidarity and redistribution – one that redirects benefits away from groups such as refugees or 'migrants' toward *white* workers. In a sense, it is the propagation of a *white* solidarity. And in fact, in many countries, so framed workers increasingly vote for far-right parties. In some cases, these parties take a socially-oriented but exclusionary position of solidarity; at other times / in other places far-right parties and actors champion individuality while positioning so constructed 'workers' interests' more centrally than they did in the past. When one considers countries like the USA or Germany, far-right actors are not propagating for an expansion of the welfare state, even though this position is held by far-right actors and parties elsewhere. Nevertheless, there is a cross-national trend toward a unified call for solidarity that centers, in particular, on so-called 'workers.' This form of solidarity is not strategic in the sense of addressing racism first, for instance, and then tackling sexism, nor is it about avoiding overlooking differences and challenges. Rather, it is an intentionally exclusive solidarity that has been consolidating over the past several years (Lefkofridi & Michel, 2014).

Different kinds of solidarity can be employed against this exclusionary model. And there are several examples that have been mobilized, albeit having their own contradictions and shortcomings as well. One notable example is the feminist resistance to far-right misogynistic policies in Poland since 2016. On the one hand, this movement clearly demonstrates how solidarity can be employed against the far right. But on the other hand, it is another example for an exclusive solidarity in the ways in which it deploys strong patriotic language and national symbolism. While this made it possible to position patriotism against far-right nationalism, it simultaneously limited the scope of solidarity and openness toward international feminist struggles. One major category examined in such studies is 'belonging,' not only in terms of who is included in the constructed category of 'women,' but also in relation to identity and belonging to 'Poland.' This form of feminist solidarity is less exclusive than that propagated by the far right, but it remains exclusive nonetheless (Ramme, 2019, p. 469ff.). In contrast, more localized examples of solidarity often overcome such boundaries. Contrary to the common assumption that local solidarity mainly works to reinforce exclusion, particularly of those constructed as 'migrants,' research shows that, at the local level, solidarity tends to be more inclusive. Numerous examples highlight how local movements have mobilized against struc-

tural and systemic injustices such as rising rents or privatization. These examples illustrate the value of solidarity in the fight for a more just and equal society. As demonstrated, this can enable efforts to counter the far-right's reductive narratives and the exclusive solidarity it propagates (Enacting Citizenship & Solidarity, 2025). A concrete case is neighborhood-based anti-fascist solidarity in Spain (Santamarina, 2021, p. 891ff.). At the same time the risk remains that even solidarity aimed at opposing structural or systemic injustices, such as unaffordable housing, can become exclusive – by overlooking the specific needs of marginalized groups like single parents, or when the focus shifts to more easily targeted 'enemies' rather than confronting 'the system.' Solidarity can take the form of local *white* or male-constructed exclusive alliances opposing the 'migrants' living nearby – this is a pillar of many local far-right policies (Santamarina, 2021, p. 891ff.). Solidarity, even in local and concrete contexts, is never fixed or stable; it must be constantly questioned, reimagined and reconfigured. For this an intersectional perspective on solidarity is key, preventing the drift toward exclusive forms of solidarity and to effectively fight the far right.

Intersectional solidarity

Intersectional solidarity is neither a newly invented concept nor an unfamiliar one. Instead, the idea of a necessarily reframed solidarity – 'intersectional solidarity' – emerged alongside the development of intersectionality as a theoretical approach. Early scholarship used the term to explain the practical implications of intersectionality for social movements and concepts of social justice, emphasizing the need for an intersectional consciousness as the basis for a new, more inclusive kind of solidarity (Tormos-Aponte, 2017, p. 707ff.). Based on these early approaches there are various studies looking at practical applications of an intersectional knowledge and consciousness. Building on intersectional analysis and its modes of communication, such as to actors engaged in social change, the concept of systems of oppression is becoming increasingly complex, highlighting the need for more nuanced, reflective and sophisticated responses. Intersectional solidarity is a key term in this context, also allowing actors to better understand their own complicity in sustaining these systems. To understand both individual and structural involvement, a new kind of literacy and accountability is required – one that does not simply reproduce injustice and discrimination, but instead fosters more inclusive change. One key aspect in this context is the embodiment of unjust structures and embodied practice(s) (Ellison & Langhout, 2020, p. 949ff.). Another is moving beyond simplifications of intersectional encounters, whether at the individual or institutional level – rather, allowing for and stressing the importance of complex perspectives on their interrelations. This makes it possible to overcome forms of intersectional hostility rooted in individualization or the marginalization of small groups. This shift enables a more

comprehensive understanding that fosters an intersectional perspective, which ultimately leads to intersectional solidarity (Kamasak et al., 2019, p. 456ff.). By understanding intersectionality not only as a method or a perspective, but as a transdisciplinary approach that calls for and accompanies action, research has also focused on working out guidelines and sharing best-practice examples. The clear aim is to empower actors working toward social change and justice to enact intersectional solidarity. One focus of such research is on social movements in the USA and beyond, analyzing internal differences related to power asymmetries and hierarchies that can lead to domination and distrust. At the same time, it highlights examples of how such forms of internal intersectional injustice can be addressed and overcome. Starting point is the analysis, followed by the communication, and finally the negotiation of divisions and foci (Einwohner et al., 2021, p. 704ff.). Through similar studies, the importance of an intersectional perspective, and of intersectional solidarity itself, has increasingly come into focus – both for research on social activism and for its practice. Such analyses show, for example, that intersectionally aware activism can reshape intersectional identities and, inter alia, change the face of activist feminism. With greater awareness of intersectional identities and inequalities, movements can become more inclusive and, ultimately, stronger, as research has shown. Beyond, for example, the feminist struggle for 'women's rights,' different layers of vulnerability, inequality, and discrimination can be taken into account. This adds complexity to activism, making it less conducive to simplified messages. This very complexity becomes a central starting point for countering simplistic far-right narratives and their proposed 'solutions' – by responding with intersectional solidarity (Guha, 2019, p. 159ff.).

Other approaches to intersectional solidarity adopt a more a critical perspective on the development of intersectionality, arguing against its appropriation and emphasizing its roots in Black feminism. One of the more recent publications on the topic, the 2025 book "Intersectional Solidarity: Black Women and the Politics of Group Consciousness" by Chaya Y. Crowder argues in this vein. It explores the conditions under which people support issues affecting Black women*, based on the insight that those who experience multiple forms of discrimination, such as Black women*, often engage in solidarity and collective action informed by an intersectional consciousness. While the primary focus is on Black women*, as well as LGBTIQ+-People of Color, the book addresses broader concerns of marginalized subgroups and their demands for intersectional solidarity. In addition to once again linking intersectionality to the major axes of power – racism, sexism and classism – the book also takes a more theoretical approach by developing a tool to measure intersectional solidarity through group consciousness. The empirical focus, here, is on the United States. It aligns with publications on intersectionality that focus primarily on Black women* while also adopting the more recently established concept of intersectional solidarity to further refine and clarify the term and its focus. Although

grounded in empirical research, the book places less emphasis on this aspect compared to the studies previously discussed. It primarily aims to conceptualize and question intersectional solidarity on a theoretical level, while also, on a secondary level, addressing how activism and levels of activist commitment can be adjusted and transformed.

Other approaches also focus on developing theoretical or terminological frameworks to better understand intersectional solidarity. However, they often shift back toward the practical side, aiming to distinguish between different approaches to intersectional solidarity. This research demonstrates that all practices of intersectional solidarity must be distinguished from the notion of an ideal, solidaric alliance across differences, since power dynamics are always at play. This does not render intersectional solidarity an unattainable dream, but rather an aspirational ideal: a guiding principle for any coalition, an ideal to work toward. Such research highlights that multiple approaches to intersectional solidarity already exist in practice, even if they are not always framed as such. At the same time, it underscores the need to analyze, communicate and (re)adjust these approaches – not to rank them as 'better' or 'worse,' but to recognize them all as ongoing efforts that require constant reflection and adaptation. Here, the intersectional approach of inter- and transdisciplinarity is of central importance, as it enables a dialogue between practice and research. Ultimately, intersectional solidarity is also a matter of framing issues in ways that allow for a different distribution of resources and modes of (re)presentation. Following this approach, a transformative form of intersectional solidarity can be achieved, but only through constant and deep engagement with 'others,' especially those who have been othered. This kind of solidarity must be durable, grounded in both individual and collective commitment, and aimed at overcoming all power asymmetries in the end. Only then can it truly be called intersectional solidarity – without dismissing the value of each step taken in that direction, including all the more or less complete efforts toward intersectional solidarity (Ciccia & Roggeband, 2021, p. 181ff.). By following this path, intersectional solidarity can become a powerful counterforce to the rise of the far right.

Intersectional solidarity and the far right

The far right, which also employs approaches of exclusive solidarity, generally follows the logic of *divide-et-impera*. Power is stabilized by creating divisions – offering solidarity and limited power to some, while further weakening others. 'Workers' are supported but only within narrowly constructed notions of 'their' so constructed 'workers needs and interests,' which are defined in opposition to feminist goals and along racist lines. Women* may receive support, but only as long as they conform to certain prescribed ideas and do not challenge the gender-binary, heteropatriar-

chal system. Indeed, the far right may claim to support 'disability rights,' but only in terms of 'special' treatment and segregated support structures. To align oneself with these prescribed lines, is at the same time, to be positioned against those who do not support or follow them. This is the classic move of divide and rule – granting privilege to some, while leaving the doors to the category of privilege theoretically partially open. In practice, rigid boundaries are drawn and 'enemies' are constructed (Henderson, 2024). Donald Trump, for example, portrays himself as the savior of 'the nation' – in defense of *white* privilege – and as the champion of a narrowly defined 'workers' power,' ideally *white*, and certainly male-read (Olorunnipa, 2025). In the end, it is all about playing one group against another – such as the male-read Black worker against feminist interests or leftist calls for systemic change, or the white, female-read individual against Black female-read individuals. If Donald Trump can be seen as a savior of anything it may well be misogyny (or racism). Nonetheless, many female-read individuals voted for him – perhaps because he frames his policies as 'rescuing' white privilege, or because they align with the image of the patriarchal savior (Bate, 2024). Intersectional solidarity recognized and critically analyzes these moves. It understands the need to accept differences, including differences in perception, as a starting point, without imposing hierarchies on them. Poverty cannot be effectively addressed by emphasizing or foregrounding racism and sexism, even though far-right actors such as Donald Trump or Germany's 'Alternative für Deutschland' claim otherwise. Theirs is a simplistic solution based on divide-et-impera. This merely shifts the location of poverty. Combating poverty, for everyone, as a society or community, necessitates an inclusive approach that recognizes the diverse conditions and structural frameworks at play. If fighting, just for example, poverty is not to become a zero-sum game, then intersectionality is essential as a guiding perspective.

Far-right policies have been coined by, inter alia, intersectional racism. The far right has historically motivated, and continues to promote, the kind of segregationist racism that declares Europe and the USA as the rightful 'home' of the constructed 'white Christian race,' while also advocating for a heteronormative family model and perpetuating discrimination against people with disabilities. One of the far right's recurring rhetorical strategies is to frame migration and 'migrants' as threats to the integrity of so constructed white nation-states – whereby, the term 'migrant' eventually serves far-right actors to mean the collective of all Black or Indigenous people, all People of Color, as well as Jews and Muslims. This ideology is often camouflaged in terms like 'ethnopluralism' and spread through forms of populist rhetoric. Underlying this is a strategy of simplification, the exploitation of existing complex challenges to gain political power through divide-and-rule tactics. Such strategies can and must be critically analyzed. The far right's approach – racializing debates, offering simplistic 'solutions' while simultaneously claiming the 'insolvability' of challenges – needs to be exposed and communicated. In response, interventions and

sustained commitment are key, grounded in the idea and practice of intersectional solidarity. This approach is not entirely new. As described, countering the far right through solidarity is a practice spread across Europe and beyond. However, this carries the risk of forming an exclusive and limited solidarity – one that unintentionally mirrors divide-et-impera tactics of the far right and ultimately and plays into their hands. To counter this risk, an intersectional perspective, and a commitment to intersectional solidarity, is key. Individual fights and commitment are important, certainly, but confronting a well-organized and well-connected far right can only succeed through inclusive solidarity.

Countering the rise of the far right with intersectional solidarity

Fostering and fighting for intersectional solidarity is no easy task, not only because solidarity is not a stable condition, but something that must be actively chosen again and again, but also because the far right actively works against it. The power of the far right lies in its ability to divide, splitting societies in ways that prevent inclusive solidarity. Major tools of this strategy are populism and simplification, which ultimately enable even (partial) far-right alliances across national borders. A part of this strategy is to claim that anti-discrimination efforts, such as gender-sensitive language or LGBTIQ+ rights, are themselves divisive, while causing much more harm through their activities and far-right rhetoric (Aktas, 2024, p. 591ff.). The reason for the persistence of this strategy of divide and conquer, actively working to prevent inclusive solidarity, is an awareness of the truth behind the simple message: 'El pueblo unido jamás será vencido.' However, and this was worked out here, the idea of a constructed 'united people' carries the risk of perpetuating discrimination and failing to realize a better world for all. Recognizing this, the well-known chant needs to be rephrased into something like: "Las personas en solidaridad intersecional jamás será vencido" – The people in intersectional solidarity will never be defeated. Yes, this version is more complicated and harder to chant, but it reflects the real complexities of our societies today.

Albeit, the far right is not a monolithic bloc, it nonetheless requires an intersectional perspective that considers the diversity among its actors. This, once again, calls for thorough analysis and nuanced communication. Considering all that has been said here about intersectional solidarity – especially in response to far-right (counter)policies – it is essential to acknowledge that there are internal differences and varying tendencies within the far right. Across Europe and beyond, the far right is heterogeneous of, in in its manifestations, styles and policies. And different far-right actors and parties, therefore, necessitate distinct forms of commitment and intervention. However, acknowledging these differences does not mean that intersectional solidarity, as a central approach of counter-commitment, is only relevant

in a few specific cases or situations. On the contrary, despite the diversity and variations within the far right, the active opposition to concepts such as intersectionality and inclusive solidarity is a common thread that unites them. For several years now, different far-right actors and tendencies have embraced the strategy of divide-et-impera, following examples like that of Donald Trump (Wallisch, 2019). Any meaningful counter-commitment and intervention must adopt the inverse strategy. This means taking up intersectional solidarity as major tool to challenge the rise of the far right, not only in Europe, but globally. Intersectional solidarity enables engagement with the complexities of power, social inequality and the respective privileging of some at the expense of the Othered and marginalized.

Solidarity as a concept, term, and practice must be critically examined, but without intersectional solidarity, resistance against the far right will remain weak. What is needed is an active engagement against stable – and stabilizing – structures and systems that uphold existing power dynamics. Intersectional solidarity is a more complex path than exclusive solidarity. Opting for an inclusive, intersectional solidarity can lead to fatalism given the many barriers, both current and anticipated, , and posed not only by the far right. Yet, intersectional solidarity also makes empowerment possible: for genuine collective action that does not come at the expense of those who are 'othered,' whose interests and needs are too often overlooked in the pursuit of a shared aim. In this positive sense, intersectional solidarity enables mutual learning, without ranking and hierarchizing lived experiences or types of expertise. Understanding that the far right targets the most vulnerable, such as poor people – vivat classism! – or so constructed migrants – vivat racism! – but independent female-read persons, too – vivat sexism! – makes standing in intersectional solidarity, more urgent than ever, echoing the idea and revised and expanded chant "Las personas en solidaridad intersecional jamás será vencido!"

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