Unveiling Images
Regimes of Visibility in the Visual Strategies of Far Right Parties Using the AfD's Election Campaign 2017 as Example

Context of research

Veiling and unveiling are well established metaphors in the Anglo-European (re)presentations of the self and the corresponding orientalized Other – especially in regard to women's bodies (Dennerlein et al. 2012:9). The image of the veiled, oppressed oriental woman historically has been used as counter topos to establish the visual topos of the unveiled, liberated European woman. This narrative can be traced back to the visual politics of the 19th century but has not lost its power over time. This culminated in a **regime of visibility** (Wenk 2012), a pressure of making oneself visible, especially for women.

People took down the AfD's campaign posters in Lünerburg, Germany.
Source:
https://www.landeszeitung.de/blog/lokales/1016592-werbung-mit-sehr-kurzer-lebensdauer [Accessed 12th January 2018]

Hypothesis

This thesis pursues the hypothesis that the AfD's election campaign of 2017 marks and visualizes a certain shift in public discourses on the Other in Europe. It seems like there is no longer a need to visually represent the Other although still drawing upon it as a frame of reference. Within the context described above, the AfD was able to evoke certain images of a gendered Muslim Other taking a certain preexisting body of knowledge for granted; particularly drawing on an "**affective economy**" specific to Europe's "**secular matrix**" (Amir-Moazami 2013). Given the extensive body of research on representations of the Other, this thesis thus will put the spotlight on what is not shown.

Main research questions

- What are the AfD's prominent visual themes?
- How are certain binary ideas about race, class and gender played out visually?
- How and why is the AfD able to convey its messages without visually manifesting the Other?
- How does the AfD draw upon a specific set of emotions and what is their productivity/functionality?
- Does this visual shift speak to a more general development in the visual strategies of far right movements?

Two of the AfD's campaign posters of the campaign for the Bundestag election 2017 defamiliarized. Source:
https://www.afd.de/meldungen-bundesverband/partnerportale/ [Accessed 17th January 2018]

Methodology

Combining **discourse analysis** and **iconography** I am going to scrutinize the visual politics of the far right with a specific focus on gender. I want to analyze the particular narratives the employed visual strategies draw upon as well as the strategies of visualizing what is not shown. Moreover, I want to include an expert interview in order to obtain insights into what the campaign designer's graphic techniques for conveying their messages are.

Sources:
- Amir-Moazami, S. 2013. „The Secular Embodiments of Face-Veil Controversies across Europe" in Göle, N. (ed) Islam and Public Controversy in Europe. Surrey: Ashgate, p.83-98.
- Dennerlein, B. Frietsch, E. Steffen, T. 2012. "Einleitung" in Dennerlein, B. Frietsch, E. Steffen, T. (eds) Verschleierter Orient – Entschleierter Okzident? (Un)Sichtbarkeit in Politik, Recht, Kunst und Kultur seit dem 19. Jahrhundert. München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, p.9-20.
- Wenk, S. 2012. "Verschleiern und Entschleiern: Ordnungen der (Un)Sichtbarkeit zwischen Kunst und Politik" in Dennerlein, B. Frietsch, E. Steffen, T. (eds) Verschleierter Orient – Entschleierter Okzident? (Un)Sichtbarkeit in Politik, Recht, Kunst und Kultur seit dem 19. Jahrhundert. München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag.