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Global–local dynamics in anti-feminist discourses: an analysis of Indian, Russian and US online communities

ANN-KATHRIN ROTHERMEL

'Women's rights are human rights.' These words, spoken by Hillary Rodham Clinton in September 1995, marked the end of the UN Decade for Women, which enshrined gender equality as a normative part of the global order. Now, 25 years later, we are witnessing a wave of attacks on women's fundamental rights. Sexist statements by heads of state, such as US President Trump's well-known misogynist outbursts and Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orbán's condemnation (and subsequent ban) of feminist and gender studies, are accompanied by a steep increase of anti-feminist mobilization 'from below'.[1] To cite just a few examples, large-scale demonstrations (both for and against) have accompanied public debates over abortion in Poland, the United States and Germany, as well as the worldwide #metoo movement against sexual harassment.[2] In addition, some contexts have experienced particularly violent misogynist incidents, as demonstrated by the increasing number of mass rape cases in India following the introduction of an anti-rape law in 2012,[3] and several male supremacist terrorist attacks in North America since 2014.[4]

In this article, I ask how these recent anti-feminist mobilizations are discursively embedded in broader developments and changes. In particular, I am interested in how anti-feminist communities mobilize around collective identities by constructing societal changes and events as local or global, and as associated with feminism or anti-feminism. This research interest arises from the coexistence of different lines of argument that have so far dominated the discussions surrounding the 'local or global' question in relation to anti-feminist mobilizations. On the one hand, anti-feminist mobilization has often been considered as driven by local resistance to societal changes and the desire for a return to the norms of earlier times: a perspective which I term *fragmented fears*. For example, before the 2016 presidential election in the United States, Suzanne Moore wrote in the *Guardian* that Donald

[1] Yas Necati, 'Today thousands of women will march against Trump, but a backlash against feminism is growing', *The Independent*, 21 Jan. 2017.

[2] Nanette Asimov, '#metoo movement spurs #himtoo backlash: "People don't want to believe"', *San Francisco Chronicle*, 13 Oct. 2018.

[3] Bula Bhadra, 'Rape law reforms in India: catalyst to gender justice or modernization in legal reforms?', in Shahid M. Shahidullah, ed., *Crime, criminal justice, and the evolving science of criminology in South Asia: India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

[4] Bruce Hoffman and Jacob Ware, 'Incels: America's newest domestic terrorism threat', in Daniel Byman, ed., *Lawfare* blog, 12 Jan. 2020 (Washington DC: Lawfare Institute/Brookings, 2020), https://www.lawfareblog.com/incels-americas-newest-domestic-terrorism-threat (accessible 5 June 2020).

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Trump's popularity was a result of post-feminist sentiment and grievances about political correctness in the United States.[5] On the other hand, the increasing visibility of simultaneous mobilizations across a range of contexts has directed public and academic attention to gender dynamics as one piece in a larger picture of global anti-liberal democratic backsliding and rising populism.[6] In this perspective, anti-feminists tend to be considered as 'globalization losers' engaging in a *global backlash* and/or forming a connected front against women's rights in a *transnational movement*.[7]

Despite these common narratives in both media and academia, as well as previous work on the significance of location for identity-building and the mobilization processes of social movements,[8] there has to date been little in-depth engagement with the construction of 'the global' and 'the local' in anti-feminist collective identities from an International Relations (IR) perspective. Building on existing insights from both social movement studies and work on anti-feminism, I argue that, while readings of anti-feminism as *fragmented fears*, a *global backlash* and a *transnational movement* provide important starting-points, in order to understand its recent power to attract in a variety of contexts and gauge its potential to threaten feminist gain, we need to undertake a systematic analysis of how global and local dynamics intersect in the construction of anti-feminist collective identities.

In this article, I provide a critical discourse analysis of online content published by six popular anti-feminist men's rights communities in Russia, India and the United States.[9] While the websites were selected on the basis of their popularity, the diversity of the three countries helps to identify global–local dynamics in anti-feminist mobilization and the strengthening of collective identities from a cross-national perspective. The analytical focus lies on how anti-feminist texts construct the position of the anti-feminist community itself as well as its feminist 'other' through reference to events, experiences and circumstances as 'local' (confined to a restricted space and population) and 'global' (affecting all humans, albeit not necessarily in the same way). This focus helps to uncover how identities are actively constructed through locational references, discursively combining local grievances and mobilization tactics with global societal changes and utopias, conceived of in the abstract.

The article contributes to several strands of research in IR. In particular, it connects the recent rise of populist anti-feminist mobilizations[10] to earlier debates

[5] Suzanne Moore, 'The backlash against feminism has hit a new low with Donald Trump', *Guardian*, 12 Oct. 2016.

[6] Ronald F. Inglehart and Pippa Norris, *Trump, Brexit and the rise of populism: economic have-nots and cultural backlash*, Harvard Kennedy School faculty research working paper (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2016).

[7] Louise Chappell, 'Contesting women's rights: charting the emergence of a transnational conservative counter-network', *Global Society* 20: 4, 2006, pp. 491–520; Rebecca Sanders, 'Norm spoiling: undermining the international women's rights agenda', *International Affairs* 94: 2, 2018, pp. 271–91.

[8] Floya Anthias, 'Where do I belong? Narrating collective identity and translocational positionality', *Ethnicities* 2: 4, 2002, pp. 491–514.

[9] While men's rights groups claim to advocate equality and men's human rights, their activism is most of the time directed against feminism. This finding is corroborated by my analysis, which is why throughout the article I refer to the groups in question as 'anti-feminist'.

[10] Paris Aslanidis, 'Populism as a collective action master frame for transnational mobilization', *Sociological Forum* 33: 2, 2018, pp. 443–64.

about the transnationalization of civil society.[11] It also adds to research on the 'dark side' of social movements, which is commonly said to have remained understudied.[12] The analysis further contributes to the growing feminist literature on anti-feminist and anti-gender narratives and movements in two respects. First, through the focus on the process of collective identity-building online, the article engages deeply with the 'backstage' of collective anti-feminist action, where collective identities are discussed and formed, and from which mobilizations emanate. This helps to understand better the processes that enable anti-feminists to override feminist gains. Second, the analysis contributes to the increasing evidence that anti-feminism is a cross-national phenomenon by explicitly combining and contrasting insights from three country contexts from three different continents.

The rest of the article is structured as follows. I first introduce discussions in different strands of academic literature on both anti-feminism and the global–local mobilization dynamics in social movements. Then, bringing these largely separate insights together with a conceptual framework on the role of location in collective identity construction, I develop a typology of three ideal-type explanations for anti-feminist collective identity formation, characterized as *fragmented fears*, *global backlash* and *transnational movement*. This typology represents a starting-point for the in-depth analysis of local and global representations in anti-feminist discourses in the remainder of the article. Through a critical discourse analysis of six anti-feminist websites in Russia, India and the United States, I assess how global and local representations are used and combined in different anti-feminist communities to facilitate identity-building and mobilization. Since these narratives are easily attached to other mainstream and right-wing narratives, I argue that they deserve further attention by social movement and IR scholars.

Anti-feminism on the rise

Anti-feminism can broadly be defined as *articulated resistance to women's rights in general and feminism in particular.* This rather broad definition builds on and includes a variety of existing conceptions, which have been analysed by feminist scholars under the labels of backlash, anti-genderism and post-feminism.[13] These include anti-feminist resistance to different aspects and different interpretations of gender and feminism as 'a concept, as an ideology or theory, and as a social practice and political project'.[14] While anti-feminism is often considered merely as an oppositional backdrop to feminism, a growing body of case-studies has started to investigate anti-feminist dynamics themselves as both *narratives* and *movements*.

In respect of *narrative*, studies such as Susan Faludi's *Backlash: the undeclared war against American women* have traced the spread of anti-feminist myths in media

[11] Mary Kaldor, 'The idea of global civil society', *International Affairs* 79: 3, 2003, pp. 583–93.
[12] Simone Chambers and Jeffrey Kopstein, 'Bad civil society', *Political Theory* 29: 6, 2001, pp. 837–65.
[13] Kristin J. Anderson, *Modern misogyny: anti-feminism in a post-feminist era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Dorota Szelewa, 'The second wave of anti-feminism? Post-crisis maternalist policies and the attack on the concept of gender in Poland', *Gender, Equal Opportunities, Research* 15: 2, 2014, pp. 33–47.
[14] Elżbieta Korolczuk and Agnieszka Graff, 'Gender as "Ebola from Brussels": the anticolonial frame and the rise of illiberal populism', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 43: 4, 2018, p. 801.

and popular culture in the United States.[15] More recently, scholars have also become interested in the role anti-feminist narratives play in particular populist right-wing parties' election campaigns and results.[16] Anti-feminism in the form of a *movement* started to gain attention in the context of the protests surrounding the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in the United States in the 1980s. Feminist researchers paid close attention to the participating anti-feminist organizations, their strategies and their relationships with religious and economic interest groups and the 'New Right'.[17] Since the beginning of the 2000s, individual case-studies on anti-feminist protests and particular groups have looked beyond the North American context towards countries as diverse as Nicaragua, India and Poland.[18] These studies explicate how anti-feminist movements build on national political contexts to mobilize successfully. More recently, some studies have explored how anti-feminist actors forge discursive and organizational ties with other conservative movements across nation-states in Europe and the Americas.[19] Thus, while studies on anti-feminism have been engaged with both particular local circumstances and transnational dynamics of network interaction and ideological diffusion, so far there has rarely been an intentional focus on how anti-feminists have used and combined representations of 'the local' and 'the global' to construct their collective identities.

Global–local dynamics and social movements

Collective identities are commonly understood as being forged by the drawing of a discursive and emotional boundary that distinguishes between members of a collective (*self*) and outsiders (*others*).[20] The social process of developing an identity by articulating such a boundary is considered essential to connect diverse beliefs

[15] Susan Faludi, *Backlash: the undeclared war against American women* (New York: Three Rivers, 1991).

[16] Stefanie Mayer, Edma Ajanovic and Birgit Sauer, 'Intersections and inconsistencies: framing gender in right-wing populist discourses in Austria', *NORA—Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 22: 4, 2014, pp. 250–66; Sahar Abi-Hassan, 'Populism and gender', in Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo and Pierre Ostiguy, eds, *The Oxford handbook of populism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Pierce Alexander Dignam and Deana A. Rohlinger, 'Misogynistic men online: how the red pill helped elect Trump', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 44: 3, 2019, pp. 589–612.

[17] Susan E. Marshall, 'Who speaks for American women? The future of antifeminism', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 515: 1, 1991, pp. 50–62; Janet Chafetz and Anthony Gary Dworkin, 'In the face of threat: organized antifeminism in comparative perspective', *Gender & Society* 1: 1, 1987, pp. 33–60.

[18] Karen Kampwirth, 'Resisting the feminist threat: antifeminist politics in post-Sandinista Nicaragua', *NWSA Journal* 18: 2, 2006, pp. 73–100; Sharmila Lodhia, '"Stop importing weapons of family destruction!" Cyber-discourses, patriarchal anxieties and the men's backlash movement in India', *Violence against Women* 20: 8, 2014, pp. 905–36; Zoe Brereton, 'Perpetuating myths of women as false complainants in rape cases in India: culture v. the law', *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice* 41: 1–2, 2017, pp. 41–62; Katarzyna Wojnicka, 'Masculist groups in Poland: aids of mainstream antifeminism', *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy* 5: 2, 2016, pp. 36–49.

[19] Roman Kuhar and David Paternotte, *Anti-gender campaigns in Europe: mobilizing against equality* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017); Eszter Kováts, 'The emergence of powerful anti-gender movements in Europe and the crisis of liberal democracy', in Michaela Köttig, Renate Bitzan and Andrea Petö, eds, *Gender and far right politics in Europe* (Cham: Springer, 2017); José Manuel Morán Faúndes, 'The geopolitics of moral panic: the influence of Argentinian neo-conservatism in the genesis of the discourse of "gender ideology"', *International Sociology* 34: 4, 2019, pp. 402–17.

[20] Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper, 'Collective identity and social movements', *Annual Review of Sociology* 27: 1, 2001, pp. 283–305.

into a coherent agenda and thereby fulfil the precondition for mobilization in collective action, facilitating the formation and maintenance of a movement.[21] Scholars working on the construction of (collective) identities have long discussed the particular role of location in this identity-building process.[22] In social movement studies, this focus on location has been increasingly discussed in the context of globalization. In the mid-1990s, social movement scholars noticed how activists had shifted to integrating more global perspectives in their movements' narratives. As movements were increasingly framing their goals in terms of global issues such as human rights, it no longer seemed sufficient to assume national boundaries as the main provider of collective identities.[23] Instead, emerging work highlighted movements' positioning of both their in-group (*us*) and their outsiders (*them*) as embedded in local, national and global political developments.[24]

Globalization processes seemed to open up new ways of identifying commonalities and developing solidarity around global issues by embedding local identities in global imaginaries or values. With regard to global women's rights, the feminist movement actively forged 'a collective identity among women and [a goal] to improve the condition of women' beyond a specific locality,[25] thereby enabling the *transnational diffusion* of feminist activism. Moreover, research showed how global norms could be used for local claim-making and collective belonging.[26] For example, Levitt and Merry show how ideas about global women's rights had been '*vernacularized*' in different ways in different contexts by local activist groups, meaning that they had become integrated and adapted, and thereby gained relevance in the context of local circumstances.[27] In a different way, large-scale protest movements at the turn of the century framed their activities in terms of resistance to, rather than support for, globalization. They highlighted the negative effects of globalization on local and individual lives as a main source of mobilizing grievances.[28] While some have argued that these new movements, owing to their anti-global attitude, should be considered as *backlash* movements more closely rooted in (and advocating a return to) national identities, Aslanidis's analysis of Occupy Wall Street and the Indignados movements reveals how they managed to

[21] Scholars have emphasized that these boundaries are almost never stable and fixed, but rather contradictory and multiple, requiring to be constantly reproduced through language and practices. For an overview of conceptions of collective identities, see Cristina Flesher Fominaya, 'Collective identity in social movements: central concepts and debates', *Sociology Compass* 4: 6, 2010, pp. 393–404; Alberto Melucci, *Challenging codes: collective action in the information age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 83.

[22] Stuart Hall, 'Old and new identities, old and new ethnicities', in Anthony D. King, ed., *Culture, globalization and the world-system: contemporary conditions for the representation of identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

[23] Jan Aart Scholte, 'The geography of collective identities in a globalizing world', *Review of International Political Economy* 3: 4, 1996, pp. 565–607.

[24] Donatella della Porta and Mario Diani, *Social movements: an introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), p. 22; Sidney Tarrow, *Power in movement: social movements and contentious politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 184.

[25] Mary E. Hawkesworth, *Globalization and feminist activism* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018; first publ. 2006), p. 35.

[26] Ludger Pries, 'Ambiguities of global and transnational collective identities', *Global Networks* 13: 1, 2013, p. 30.

[27] Peggy Levitt and Sally Merry, 'Vernacularization on the ground: local uses of global women's rights in Peru, China, India and the United States', *Global Networks* 9: 4, 2009, pp. 441–61.

[28] Donatella della Porta, Massimiliano Andretta, Herbert Reiter and Lorenzo Mosca, *Globalization from below: transnational activists and protest networks* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), p. 15.

combine local experiences with a powerful transnational populist master frame to create *global collective identities*.[29] Conway's analysis of the World Social Forum, in turn, shows how feminist activities in the context of anti-globalization movements are 'rooted in their own particular group histories but, through deep listening and dialogue … expand … out from their immediate experience and viewpoints'.[30] In this way, anti-globalization movements' resistance to global developments can be seen both as a call for a return to local politics and as a pathway to an alternative vision of globalization.

To sum up, scholars have provided extensive insights into the ways in which movements' collective identities can be positioned *vis-à-vis* global and local changes, and how this positioning influences mobilizing dynamics across audiences and issues. Nevertheless, Della Porta observes that 'social movement scholars have tended to focus attention on social movements to which they are themselves sympathetic',[31] which has led to a general neglect of illiberal or 'uncivil' society movements, such as anti-feminism.[32]

Conceptual framework and typology of global–local dynamics in anti-feminist mobilizations

As outlined above, work on collective identity formation and mobilization for collective action has generated numerous insights into the role of location in the identities and activism of various social movements. However, most of these studies have largely neglected regressive movements, such as anti-feminism. Meanwhile, feminist work on anti-feminism has predominantly focused on individual country contexts or alliances, and has underemphasized the range of ways in which global–local dynamics are inherent in anti-feminist sense-making practices. This section provides a conceptual framework that combines insights from both strands of literature with theoretical conceptions of location in collective identities to generate a typology of three ideal-types of global–local dynamics in anti-feminist collective identities.

Following existing discourse-theoretical approaches, I understand collective identities to be constructed through a discursively produced sense of self, rather than particular 'natural' characteristics of the individual speakers.[33] From this perspective, discourses 'constitute the social world by bringing certain phenomena into being, including objects of knowledge, categories of social subjects, forms of *self*, social relationships and conceptual frameworks'.[34] Discursively produced

[29] Aslanidis, 'Populism as a collective action master frame'.
[30] Janet Conway, 'Transnational feminisms building anti-globalization solidarities', *Globalizations* 9: 3, 2012, p. 382.
[31] Donatella della Porta, 'Social movement studies and methodological pluralism: an introduction', in Donatella della Porta, ed., *Methodological practices in social movement research* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 3.
[32] Chambers and Kopstein, 'Bad civil society'; Clifford Bob, 'Civil and uncivil society', in Michael Edwards, ed., *The Oxford handbook of civil society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 209–19.
[33] Susan Ainsworth and Cynthia Hardy, 'Critical discourse analysis and identity: why bother?', *Critical Discourse Studies* 1: 2, 2004, pp. 225–59; Veronika Koller, 'Applying social cognition research to critical discourse studies: the case of collective identities', in Christopher Hart and Piotr Cap, eds, *Contemporary critical discourse studies* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), pp. 147–66.
[34] Susan Ainsworth and Cynthia Hardy, 'Discourse and identities', in David Grant, Cynthia Hardy, Cliff Oswick

'set[s] of relations' are unstable and constantly have to be (re-)produced through the articulation of socio-cognitive representations of 'beliefs/knowledge, values, norms, goals and emotions'.[35] These representations are connected and defined through dialectical differences and relational communalities, both internally, between the different meanings that constitute the discourse, and externally, between different competing discourses and identities.[36]

Among other differential identity markers, location plays a central role in the construction of identities by providing a backdrop for the production of such dialectical relations. Representations of 'self' and 'other' are constructed through experiences of 'significant moments of crisis and transformation',[37] which in turn are situated in space and identified as 'global' or 'local'. Thus, as a central aspect of the process of collective identity-building, speakers discursively position themselves and their communities in relation both to what they identify as 'global' changes, which affect all humans (albeit not necessarily in the same way), and to 'local' developments, which are confined to a restricted space and population—most commonly a particular nation-state or region. Reading interpretations of anti-feminism through this framework focuses attention not so much on 'real-life' locations of speakers and alliances between movements as on how representations of global events and local circumstances are produced as a frame for the positioning of the 'self' and the 'other' in the world.

It is important to note that from this relational perspective on collective identity-building, boundaries and synergies between the 'global' and the 'local' are just as much discursively constructed as those between 'self' and 'other'.[38] In addition, feminists have pointed to the importance of intersectionality, whereby geographical positions intersect with other identity markers, such as gender, sexuality, age, (dis)ability, social class and position.[39] Focusing on these connections can provide insight into how anti-feminists (re-)produce gendered hierarchies, roles and power relations, and how they are associated with different feminized or masculinized localities. Collective identities thus make sense of one's place in the world by constructing a sense of self and other through the continual (re-)production of locations of hierarchy and power through articulation and discourse. The typology in table 1 identifies three recurring global–local dynamics in common readings of anti-feminism and sets out how they situate anti-feminism between global and local representations.

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and Linda L. Putnam, eds, *The Sage handbook of organizational discourse* (London: Sage, 2004), p. 154 (emphasis in original).

[35] Koller, 'Applying social cognition research', p. 151; see also: Norman Fairclough, *Critical discourse analysis: the critical study of language* (London: Routledge, 2013).

[36] Urs Stäheli, 'Die politische Theorie der Hegemonie: Ernesto Laclau und Chantal Mouffe', in André Brodocz and Gary S. Schaal, eds, *Politische Theorien der Gegenwart* (Opladen: Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2006), p. 257.

[37] Nira Yuval-Davis, 'Theorizing identity: beyond the "us" and "them" dichotomy', *Patterns of Prejudice* 44: 3, 2010, p. 267; Anthias, 'Where do I belong?'.

[38] Hall, 'Old and new identities', pp. 62, 67; Janet Conway, 'Geographies of transnational feminisms: the politics of place and scale in the world march of women', *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society* 15: 2, 2008, p. 212.

[39] Michelle M. Lazar, 'Feminist critical discourse analysis: articulating a feminist discourse praxis', *Critical Discourse Studies* 4: 2, 2007, p. 141.

Table 1: Ideal-types of anti-feminist collective identities between global and local representations

	Self-positioning	*Other-positioning (reference points)*
Fragmented fears	Local	Local
Global backlash	Local	Global
Transnational movement	Global	Global

First, anti-feminism has often been understood as a conservative backlash in response to feminist achievements. From this perspective, seen as a dynamic born out of *fragmented fears*, anti-feminism results from an actual or perceived shift of power through local political and social reforms. Indeed, many studies along these lines identify particular local legal reforms or public events as the root of anti-feminist mobilizing.[40] In this reading, the anti-feminist collective identity positions both the anti-feminist 'self' and the feminist 'other' in the context of local developments. Moreover, the character of the backlash as a reaction to local changes is often connected with a goal of reinstating or reinvigorating an 'earlier era of male privilege'.[41] The mobilizations gather around a local traditionalist context, whereby different local developments caused by a local presence of *the other* (feminist advancements) lead to mobilizations to further local reinstatements of an earlier state of affairs. This perspective thus connects anti-feminist collective identities with conservative politics and local traditions.[42]

Second, anti-feminism can also be understood as a backlash against not only local but also global dynamics, such as negative experiences of globalization, whereby the local in-group stands against an out-group associated with global events and changes. Regarding the global North, this understanding is reflected in recent academic and media conceptualizations of anti-feminist activism as born from a 'crisis of masculinity' as a result of worldwide economic and political changes.[43] This reading is also particularly common in studies that explore the connection between gender and the rise of populism and right-wing extremism in different European countries.[44] Regarding the global South, case-studies have uncovered a similar dynamic in which a narrative of feminism as global 'westernization' or

[40] Robert Wyrod, 'Between women's rights and men's authority: masculinity and shifting discourses on gender difference in urban Uganda', *Gender and Society* 22: 6, 2008, pp. 799–823; Chafetz and Dworkin, 'In the face of threat'.

[41] Sue Thomas, '"Backlash" and its utility to political scientists', *Critical Perspectives on Gender and Politics* 4: 4, 2008, pp. 615–23.

[42] Ann E. Cudd, 'Analysing backlash to progressive social movements', in Anita M. Superson and Ann E. Cudd, eds, *Theorizing backlash: philosophical reflections on the resistance to feminism* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).

[43] Michael Kimmel, *Angry white men: American masculinity at the end of an era* (New York: Nation, 2013); Ulf Mellström, 'In the time of masculinist political revival', *NORMA: International Journal for Masculinity Studies* 11: 3, 2016, pp. 135–8.

[44] Suvi Keskinen, 'Antifeminism and white identity politics: political antagonisms in radical right-wing populist and anti-immigration rhetoric in Finland', *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 3: 4, 2013, pp. 225–32; Mayer et al., 'Intersections and inconsistencies'; Elizabeth Pearson. 'Extremism and toxic masculinity: the man question re-posed', *International Affairs* 95: 6, Nov. 2019, pp. 1251–70.

'cultural imperialism' motivates local anti-feminist counter-mobilization.[45] Such anti-feminist identities are based on a *global backlash* dynamic, whereby it is not so much localized changes as the diverse aspects of (neo-liberal) globalization itself that are perceived as threatening and as necessitating activism to ensure 'the re-emergence of local cultures and cultural authenticity'.[46]

Finally, in parallel with conceptualizations of liberal social movements, including the global women's movement, anti-feminist global–local dynamics can be read as part of an emergent *transnational movement*, which connects its followers through reference to global norms as a source of both grievances and goals for change. In particular, recent studies on the building of alliances for mobilizations in anti-gender campaigns in Europe and the Americas have revealed dynamics whereby both anti-feminist grievances and goals, and their 'others', are positioned in reference to global dynamics.[47]

All three types are, of course, likely to be represented in more complex ways in real-world anti-feminist mobilizations than the summary classification in table 1 suggests. However, they represent broad ideal-types that can provide insight into how global–local dynamics are currently being understood in the context of anti-feminist mobilizing. The following analysis turns away from academic and media discussions *about* anti-feminism and towards identity construction *among* anti-feminists themselves. As in academic discussions, the global–local dynamics exposed in this self-positioning are not necessarily intentional and conscious, but rather should be read as part of an ongoing, often contradictory process of 'becoming' and forging identity. In this way, the three ideal-types serve as a starting-point from which we may gain a better understanding of the role global–local dynamics play in current cross-national anti-feminist mobilization dynamics.

Analysing anti-feminist collective identities in online communities: case selection and methodology

In line with other analyses of collective identities, I have conducted a critical discourse analysis.[48] To access the discursive context in which anti-feminist collective identities are constructed, I focused on anti-feminist communities online. Since the beginning of the 2000s, anti-feminist communities have developed a powerful online presence, which has come to be known as the *manosphere*: a loose collection of blogs and forums devoted to men's rights, sexual strategy and misogyny. Recently, this environment has attracted increasing attention from feminist researchers interested in the online (and offline) violence that emanates

[45] Korolczuk and Graff, 'Gender as "Ebola from Brussels"'; Katherine E. Brown, 'Religious violence, gender and post-secular counterterrorism', *International Affairs* 96: 2, March 2020, p. 298.

[46] Namie Tsujigami, 'A "gender backlash" in the midst of globalization: the dynamic of the "anti-cedwiyat" in contemporary Saudi Arabia', *Global Studies Journal* 2: 4, 2009, p. 18.

[47] Faúndes, 'The geopolitics of moral panic'; David Paternotte and Roman Kuhar, 'Disentangling and locating the "global right": anti-gender campaigns in Europe', *Politics and Governance* 6: 3, 2018, pp. 6–19; Kuhar and Paternotte, *Anti-gender campaigns in Europe*.

[48] Koller, 'Applying social cognition research'; Brooke Richardson and Rachel Langford, 'A shifting collective identity', *Critical Discourse Studies* 12: 1, 2015, pp. 78–96.

from the manosphere.[49] Scholars have paid attention to the particular masculinities and digital misogynistic strategies that are enabled through the manosphere and how they overlap with similar formations in the sphere of the radical right.[50] From the perspective of collective identity-building, the various online spaces associated with the manosphere can be conceptualized as the 'backstage' area for anti-feminist (on- and offline) mobilizations, where 'performers are present but the audience is not'.[51] Here, participants can spread and discuss the ideas and strategies around which their communities coalesce before taking them into a wider public sphere. These spaces therefore offer a rare glimpse into the process of collective identity formation and presentation among the in-group.

In order to select from the numerous websites of the manosphere, I followed the assumption that 'the most frequently-visited websites are most likely to have the greatest potential to impact social understandings … by virtue of the fact that these websites are the most likely to have been viewed' by the greatest number of people.[52] From a database of frequently discussed anti-feminist websites and groups, I selected six websites with the help of the web database ALEXA,[53] which ranks websites according to the traffic they receive globally (see table 2).[54]

Despite the nature of the internet as a *globalized* technology, in order to be able to assess the global–local interplay in anti-feminist identities I deliberately included nation-state boundaries as an indicator for the local geographical context in which identity construction occurs. In order to be able to triangulate local representations within the same context, I selected at least two websites for each geographical context from the ranking. Geographical context was established through three conditions: (a) the site had to have a geographically specific identifier in the domain; (b) the overwhelming number of visitors listed on ALEXA had to be accessing the site from that same country; (c) the groups or websites had to identify as targeting individuals or issues relating specifically to that country in their mission/'about us' statement. This process resulted in a final selection of six

[49] Lise Gotell and Emily Dutton, 'Sexual violence in the "manosphere": antifeminist men's rights discourses on rape', *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy* 5: 2, 2016, pp. 65–80; Alice E. Marwick and Robyn Caplan, 'Drinking male tears: language, the manosphere, and networked harassment', *Feminist Media Studies* 18: 4, 2018, pp. 543–59.

[50] Debbie Ging, 'Alphas, betas, and incels: theorizing the masculinities of the manosphere', *Men and Masculinities* 22: 4, 2017, pp. 638–57; Karen Lumsden and Emily Harmer, eds, *Online othering: exploring digital violence and discrimination on the web* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); Debbie Ging and Eugenia Siapera, *Gender hate online: understanding the new anti-feminism* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

[51] Ruth Wodak, *The politics of fear: what right-wing populist discourses mean* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2015), p. 127.

[52] Louise Carter, *Multimodal critical discourse analysis of systematically distorted communication in intercountry adoption industry websites*, PhD diss., Washington State University, 2011, p. 71.

[53] ALEXA is a free service hosted by Amazon, which provides information about website traffic: see https://www.alexa.com/. The initial selection of websites was based on a review of newspaper and academic articles on online anti-feminist communities, excluding those that were social media-based. Through the newspaper analysis, I also ensured that the websites were reasonably well known and that the phenomenon of anti-feminism was more widely discussed within the local context.

[54] The ALEXA rank refers to the time of analysis in August 2015. With a recent shift of the manosphere from the realm of blogs and websites to social media, some of the sites are no longer active in 2020. For an analysis of the shifting spaces of the manosphere, see Manoel Ribeiro, Jeremy Blackburn, Barry Bradlyn, Emiliano De Cristofaro, Gianluca Stringhini, Summer Long, Stephanie Greenberg and Savvas Zannettou, *From pick-up artists to incels: a data-driven sketch of the manosphere* (New York: Cornell University, 2020).

Table 2: Final selection of six anti-feminist websites, and articles from those websites

Site name	*URL*	*Year founded*	*ALEXA rank*	*Country*	*No. of articles included*	*No. of words included*
Return of Kings	returnofkings.com	2012	16,199	US	19	23,730
A Voice for Men	avoiceformen.com	2014	26,180	US	15	27,163
Antiwomen	antiwomen.ru	2006	83,367	Russia	9	17,722
The Masculist	masculist.ru/blogs	2015	181,563	Russia	10	27,311
Men's Rights India	menrightsindia.net	2009	547,070	India	7	13,354
Save Indian Family	saveindianfamily.org	2015	1,354,982	India	9	10,699

anti-feminist websites from the United States, Russia and India.[55] While a systematic comparative study between the content of the websites was not the main goal of the analysis, the wide variation in political systems, population demographics and traditions across these three countries is helpful in capturing as broad as possible a range of contexts for anti-feminist identity construction.

To identify the text corpus for the analysis, I included both text from the 'about' section of each website and significant articles, the latter identified either by the website administrator's 'most important' designation or by the 'most read' category.[56] The final selection, encompassing 69 articles in total, is depicted in table 2. For the five websites that follow an interactive format (blog or forums), the selection includes articles from a variety of active manosphere users.[57] In analysing the texts I paid particular attention, in accordance with my focus on discursively constructed global–local dynamics, to how discourse participants articulate the social reality in the context of global and local dynamics in relation to their own ('self') and 'other' subjectivities. The reference to 'reality' here means not that I aim to assess how references to grievances and goals are related to the real-life

[55] Two of the websites, A Voice for Men (AVfM) and Antiwomen, did not fulfil criterion (c). However, regarding AVfM, many aspects of the mission statement are explicitly concerned with American legal changes, which justified its inclusion. In the case of Antiwomen, the exclusively Russian language of the forum was taken as sufficient evidence of geographical context to justify inclusion as a second Russian website.

[56] The articles on both the Indian and US websites were almost entirely in English. For some references, I received help from a Hindi-speaker. The Russian websites were analysed in Russian by me and translated only for reference in this article.

[57] The exception to this is Men's Rights India, where there is only one author. I was unable to find a second Indian website that could satisfy all three criteria of (a) being frequently read, (b) being clearly associated with the country context and (c) offering interactive content. While the articles included had author bylines, I have not included these in the analysis or the references provided in this article. Comments below articles were not included in the analysis. The text corpus can be made available upon request.

contexts and experiences of the speakers, but rather how those references are discursively constructed in 'sets of relations' through reference to broader social dynamics and phenomena. In other words, I am interested in the ways in which 'local' or 'global' representations of events, circumstances and experiences are used to embed the 'self' and the 'other' in space, and in social hierarchies. This focus led to a coding process, whereby events and themes were coded as 'local' when they were presented as denoting regional or nationally specific experiences and interpretations of developments, and as global when they were perceived as occurring across contexts on a global scale.[58] In addition, I focused on identifying patterns in the communicative strategies employed within and across texts (intertextuality).

Of global backlashes and fragmented fears: global–local dynamics in anti-feminist collective identities online

Following Koller's methodology for the analysis of collective identities,[59] in the following sections I first outline what social actors and subjectivities are produced, and how, before turning to an analysis of their global–local positioning. The interplay between 'self' and 'other' in global–local dynamics exposes both differences and overlaps between the selected anti-feminist websites, serving to elucidate how they enable different mobilization dynamics.

'Self' and 'other': social actors and communicative strategies in anti-feminist texts

Across all six websites, gender is the main identity marker on which the construction of the social world is centred. With regard to the representation of social groups, while men in anti-feminist texts are typically seen as a unified group 'across all races and ethnicities' (A Voice for Men), women are often divided into an *ambivalent group* of women and a *universally problematic group* of feminists. It is not women *per se* against whom anti-feminists position themselves; it is, rather, the *empowerment* of women (which is perceived to be at the expense of men), represented by feminism and feminists, whom anti-feminists conceptualize as their out-group. This oppositional construction of the two social groups is facilitated through (mis-)representations of feminist claims and ideas as universally bad ('a dangerous and destructive ideology': The Masculist; 'endlessly chides men, infantilizes women': A Voice for Men), and associations of feminism with violence (Return of Kings), hatred (Save Indian Family), and extinction (Antiwomen). Other social actor groups are either absent or generally perceived as subordinate ('If you think it's all about race, think again': A Voice for Men).

The way in which most articles establish these social groups follows a pattern: a short contextualization, followed by a lengthy explication of the skewed gender

[58] Major themes in the texts included 'the family', 'tradition', 'power', 'nature', 'globalization'. The full codebook can be made available upon request.
[59] Koller, 'Applying social cognition research'.

roles and the application of the root of victimization to the *system* or *governance* of feminism. While some articles close with a brief conclusion which calls for anti-feminist mobilizing, most of the texts are dedicated to a depiction of grievances and their attribution to the out-group. These representations of the 'other' are the major means by which the 'self' is created as the less powerful counterpart. To underline this victimization, articles from all six websites use a remarkably similar communicative strategy, which I have termed 'evidence-based' misogyny, exemplified in figure 1.

Figure 1: A section of text from an article entitled 'Matriarchy', dated February 2003, posted on the website 'Antiwomen', divided by communicative strategies inherent in the argumentation

Evidence: 'In Russia, the Orthodox Synod registered 4,000 divorces. This means that while the population has increased by about three times since 1990, the number of divorces increased by 240 times ... "In the interest of children", the share of the property seized from the man in case of divorce may be up to 75%.'

Victimization: 'In case of divorce, the ex-husband is deprived of virtually everything he has earned over the years of married life. I will not talk about the strong psychological stress associated with divorce and matriarchal expropriation, but the chances for a man to find himself somewhere in the neighbourhood with an open bottle of vodka in his hand increase significantly! … The statistics of suicide among men are more than six times higher than for women!'

Misogyny: 'These changes in the demographic situation are caused by the arrival of matriarchy … In addition, women believe real mean should leave the marriage, taking with them only socks, underwear and a toothbrush! It seems that in these gender roles, a man is made of iron! This is not the case.'

Note: Translated from Russian to English by the author.

The 'evidence-based' part illustrates the problems for men in society through references to statistics and popular culture. It is important to note that this 'evidence' is often mischaracterized, mainly through the use of false causalities to support claims (demographic change = 'male genocide': The Masculist). Misogyny, in turn, links these problems to essentializing misogynist images about women as power holders. Combining the misogynist and the evidence-based parts into anti-feminist claims fulfils the purpose of establishing the 'other' of feminism as a clear backdrop against which participants in the anti-feminist discourse are constructed as united through shared experiences of victimization, while also creating a direction for potential anti-feminist mobilization and collective action.

'Global and local': constructing location and positioning subjectivities in anti-feminist texts

While the social groups and communicative strategies are remarkably similar across the articles examined, the analysis exposes interesting patterns in how those groups and strategies are discursively embedded by constructing certain themes, events and circumstances as, respectively, 'global' and 'local'. The following subsections briefly sketch the main findings of the textual analysis with regard to the geographic position of feminism (other) and anti-feminism (self) in the collective identities in each of the three country contexts; I then move on to contextualize commonalities and differences in these global–local dynamics as well as their potential and limitations for mobilization.

Russia: Soviet feminism versus religion and nature On the two Russian websites, the roots of feminism are positioned within the cultural context of Soviet Russia where, straight away in 1917, 'feminism was implemented at the national level' (Antiwomen). This construction of feminism as something 'local' is evident through tropes and cultural references to the history of Soviet communism. This locally constructed feminism is, however, considered to have spread to become a global 'opium for the people' (Antiwomen). This means that references to 'feminism today' are commonly embedded in comparisons with other states, utilizing anecdotes as evidence to strengthen the credibility of the representations. While every country is portrayed as affected by feminism ('it is illogical to accuse [Iran] of discrimination against women—did you know that according to local laws if a woman simply tells the police that a man offended her, he will be whipped without a trial?': Antiwomen), there is a clear hierarchy in the degree to which feminism is regarded as institutionalized. For example, 'feminization' in the United States and the United Kingdom is considered to be worse than or on the same level as in Russia, whereas India is often referred to as better, along with Muslim societies (Iran, Pakistan and Chechnya) (The Masculist). With regard to the effects of this feminization, the articles refer to problems for Russian men in terms of relationships (divorce rates), demographic change, alcoholism and suicide which is painted as leading to an 'extinction' of Russian civilization (Antiwomen).

The counterpart to this global advancement of feminism and its effects on Russian society is found in nature and in more traditional cultures outside Russia. Underlined by the repeated use of 'evidence-based' misogyny, the desired subordinate position of women is attributed to their natural predispositions, which are presented as evident throughout history ('women can be scientists, because men invented the theory, the tools, built the laboratory and taught her the methodology': The Masculist). The authors thereby construct a dialectical relationship between, on the one hand, an initially local Soviet-Russian feminism which has turned into a contemporary globalized feminism and, on the other, an abstract pre- or early civilizational narrative of patriarchy that was once universal (or is at least not defined in local terms) and has now been replaced by the threatening 'triumphant march' (The Masculist) towards global 'matriarchy'. This construction

positions anti-feminism as a more 'natural' and 'decent' version of society than the current global model and its tangible repercussions in local Russian experiences of divorce, alcoholism and suicide.

India: western feminist imperialism The majority of Indian articles focus on the legal situation of men who are dealing with cases of divorce, child custody and rape accusations. These legal conditions—depicted through experiences from particular public or personal cases—are always accompanied by an attribution of guilt to 'the other' in the form of 'feminist/matriarchal' wives, families and institutions, including courts (Men's Rights India, Save Indian Family). In contrast to the Russian articles, Indian articles often trace the roots of the perceived decline of Indian society back to the influence of global initiatives. Feminism is at least partially perceived as an organized *outside* phenomenon, which has found a way into Indian society and keeps reproducing its negative effects through NGOs, international organizations, and media engaging in 'relentless propaganda about rapes in India' (Save Indian Family). This supports the global backlash dynamic, in which anti-feminism is constructed as a response to feminism as a western, imperial and hypocritical project.

By casting 'the West' as both imperialist and anti-men's rights, these representations embed the anti-feminist 'self' in a stronger anti-western identity. Such language aims to attract the support of 'many other Indians [who] are really pissed off with this attitude of the West' (Save Indian Family). While the feminist 'other' is therefore strongly associated with global representations, the anti-feminist self remains a rather vague and contradictory counterpoint in the Indian articles. In fact, most articles do not provide a solution or alternative anti-feminist ideal, but are restricted to a negative collective identity conceived of as the antithesis to local feminist society caused by 'the West'. In the few articles that attempt to provide a clearer self-positioning, there is an interesting emulation of US linguistic constructions ('gynocentric', 'white knights', 'Beta', 'Alpha', etc.), along with references to anti-feminist websites based in the United States, which indicate an awareness of the transnational diffusion of anti-feminist narratives.

The United States: the West as source of both the 'worst women' and the anti-feminist role model On the two US websites, traditional gender roles are represented as elements in a 'sexual marketplace', restricting men and women in different ways ('a woman's value significantly depends on her fertility and beauty. A man's value significantly depends on his resources, intellect, and character': Return of Kings). This constructed gendered relationship is called 'gynocentrism' owing to the primary role of men as protectors and care-takers of women. In contrast to gynocentrism, feminism is understood as a product of the twentieth century, during which political and social developments have 'driven a wedge between the sexes' (A Voice for Men), so that now 'modern women, enjoying both equal rights and a fair amount of traditional chivalry . . ., utterly dominate heterosexual men' (Return of Kings). Most of the US articles locate the rise of feminism at a point in history at which capitalist industrialization in the United States became

transformed into a knowledge economy, alienating male blue-collar workers. They thereby align feminism with the US experience of neo-liberal capitalism. However, while these experiences of victimhood are set in the context of the United States, the US websites—in contrast to the Indian and Russian examples, which construct feminism in reference to local contexts, through Hindi terms (*patni-peedit*—'husband harassed by wife': Men's Rights India) or Russian literary and historical tropes—frequently set representations of feminist societies in more universalizing terms as a danger for men and mankind, often compared to communism or 'cultural Marxism' (Return of Kings).

Interestingly, this globalized 'danger' is accompanied by a simultaneous alliance of anti-feminism with global values and tropes that reflect the language of the global women's and human rights movements ('It is the *radical notion that* men owe women nothing whatsoever': A Voice for Men). Anti-feminism is depicted as 'the first attempt in history for a sex to attempt to break out of its traditional role. Feminism is *not* this; it is the entrenchment of the power that women already held' (A Voice for Men) and as 'ethics … which will prevent society from going into unceremonious decline' (Return of Kings). These associations paint a picture of anti-feminism as a liberating global ideology, similar to the civil rights movement, the fight against apartheid and the LGBT movement (A Voice for Men). This transnational aspiration is underlined by an effort to render their narratives available beyond the US context through the translation of articles into other languages and the establishment of daughter-websites (A Voice for Men—India). Overall, the websites depict anti-feminism as an emerging global counter-movement, in which the United States takes the role of both the first society to experience the 'toxic obsession with the problems of women' (A Voice for Men) and the role model for a novel global anti-feminist movement.

Mobilizing through collective identity constructions between 'the local' and 'the global'

All of the websites analysed construct anti-feminist collective identities against the perceived backdrop of a growing societal trend to empower women at the expense of men. This backdrop is constructed in reference to global and local dynamics over time with regard to the 'self' and the 'other'. This section categorizes and compares these constructions with the help of the typology of *fragmented fears*, *global backlash* and *transnational movement*, and explores different ways in which global–local dynamics are used by anti-feminists for collective identity formation and mobilization.

In accordance with the insights offered by the *fragmented fears* narrative, the contemporary local context serves as evidence for a 'feminized' (Antiwomen), 'gynocentric' (A Voice for Men) or 'matriarchal' (Men's Rights India) contemporary society. The pattern of 'evidence-based' misogyny facilitates this embedding by referring to what are presented as particular local experiences, through national statistical data or historical and cultural references. In cases where these shared

experiences are set in relation to other countries, it is usually in order to establish the writer's own context as at least among the worst affected, if not *the* worst situation, thereby creating a hierarchy of victimization rather than solidarity. This remarkably similar construction of the 'local' as symptomatic of the social hierarchy between in- and out-group is accompanied in all three cases by broader, more abstract constructions of the 'feminist other' in time and space. The construction of an advancing feminization embeds the identified 'fragmented fears' in a broader *backlash* dynamic against a powerful globalizing feminism, and thereby establishes anti-feminist identities as of abstract, universal relevance. Globalization serves as an ambivalent dynamic productive of (economic but also social) forces conducive to both feminism and anti-feminism through online references to other places, and the US construction of an emerging *transnational counter-movement*. In line with assessments of other global (in particular anti-globalization) dynamics in social movement studies, then, globalization and the idea of universal rights and aspirations are seen simultaneously as driving counterproductive power balances (feminization) and as presenting opportunities for (mostly abstract and undefined) solutions.

These trends reveal three interesting and partly contradictory findings with regard to anti-feminist mobilization dynamics. First, contrary to what would be expected from the literature on *fragmented fears*, images of the local or national past are overall not visualized as offering ways to regain power. Instead, the local context—its structures and institutions (India), its history (Russia) and its culture (United States)—is often perceived as an essential part of the problem. National references therefore tend not to translate into support for the nation-state (patriotism) or attachment to the national identity (nationalism). This at least partially contradicts previous studies of fragmented fears, which align anti-feminism almost automatically with nationalist sentiments and movements.

Second, presenting the local and global as 'feminized' is crucial in establishing the victimization narrative central to anti-feminism and creating a shared collective identity which, through the role of globalization, can transcend local particularities. However, the way in which transnational experiences are set in hierarchical relations (Russia and America as 'worst' and India as better, but reproachful towards the West), rather than through narratives of solidarity, limits the creation of transnational solidarities compared to progressive movements such as the global women's movement.

Third, in addition to identifying the construction of a feminist threat through local *and* global representations, the analysis exposes interesting variations in how exactly the global–local dynamics vary across the different contexts (see table 3). Focusing on how anti-feminists construct trajectories of gendered hierarchies over time shows how, despite the relevance of global representations, their mobilizations are deeply embedded in locally powerful discourses. On the Russian websites, through both the local references and communicative strategies, the root of the feminist 'other' is presented as deeply intertwined with a problematizing depiction of Soviet communism as the root of contemporary Russian problems. The

two Indian cases in turn produce feminism as a western imperial import, whereas the US websites connect feminism to the (economic) problems that came to the United States in the wake of neo-liberal globalization. The totalizing language of *us* versus *them*, which accepts gendered power dynamics as the only acceptable explanation for local grievances, provides a clear direction for anti-feminist activism against the 'feminist other'. Other underlying class-based (neo-liberal globalization, financial crisis), political (fall of Soviet Union, communism) or race-based (post-colonial, imperial histories) explanations for the experiences are overwritten. This dynamic exposes the necessity for anti-feminists to keep the option for a dynamic interplay between global and local representations in order to best attach (vague) anti-feminist collective identities to other existing experiences and discursive constructions. It also explains both differences and commonalities between the anti-feminist discourses across contexts as they build on already existing powerful narratives in both right-wing and mainstream politics.

Table 3: Global–local construction of grievances in anti-feminist collective identities

Country	*Site name*	*'Other-positioning': the context of feminism*
Russia	Antiwomen The Masculist	From local (Soviet Union) to global
India	Save Indian Family Men's Rights India	From global/western (international organizations/NGOs) to local
United States	Return of Kings A Voice for Men	Global (due to nature and global feminism)

Global backlash or fragmented fears? Conclusion and outlook

The recent popularity of anti-feminist politics across a range of countries shows that their collective identities have been attached with ease to different populist parties' strategies as well as to racist and nationalist movements. Given these developments, anti-feminist utterances and activism both on- and offline deserve more detailed and systematic attention from both feminist and social movement scholars. In this article, I have argued that a focus on global–local dynamics is a crucial part of work towards a more detailed understanding of anti-feminist mobilizations, from the perspective of both social movement studies and feminist work on anti-feminism.

Building on earlier insights into the geographic embedding of collective identities, the study has revealed how anti-feminist collective identity-building processes combine imageries from a range of global–local dynamics, which I have termed *fragmented fears*, *global backlash* and *transnational movement*. This combination of global and local dynamics enables them to transcend nationalist narratives and

to combine local fears with a discursively constructed broader, abstract representation of globalization as simultaneously danger and opportunity. The specific ways in which anti-feminist discourses vary across the three contexts in respect of how they connect global and local experiences and crises into narratives of an oppositional 'war between the sexes' have further revealed their embeddedness in locally salient societal discourses. The discursive simplification of existing complex and intersectional trajectories into a binary depiction of a 'war of the sexes' with a clear antagonist (feminism) serves in turn to provide a clear and emotionally charged direction for the mobilizing of collective action. Exploring the ways in which anti-feminists combine local and national grievances and backlash dynamics with global aspirations and race-, class- and gender-based grievances into simplistic and totalizing world-views can provide a better understanding of the current appeal of anti-feminism in different contexts and its potential to mobilize across broader audiences. This provides a foundation for further assessments of the mechanisms behind the current attacks on women's rights, as well as the development of potential strategies to counter them.