NATIONALIST RESPONSES TO THE CRISES IN EUROPE
OLD AND NEW HATREDs

Cathrine Thorleifsson
Nationalist Responses to the Crises in Europe

The last few years have witnessed a remarkable resurgence of populist nationalism as indicated by Brexit, the Trump presidency and the rise of radical parties of the far right. *Nationalist Responses to the Crises in Europe* examines the drivers, methods and local appeal of populist nationalism. Based on multi-sited fieldwork in England, Hungary and Norway, Cathrine Thorleifsson explores the various material conditions, historical events and social contexts that shape distinct forms of xenophobia and intolerance toward migrants and minorities. Combining analysis of the discourses propagated by populist radical right parties like the UK Independence Party, Fidesz, Jobbik and the Norwegian Progress Party with an analysis of the fears and concerns of supporters, Thorleifsson develops wider conclusions about the drivers and character of populist nationalism and the way in which these differ across national contexts. An empirically grounded study of how the demand and supply sides of populist nationalism are reconfigured in response to the globalized crises of economy, culture and displacement, this book will appeal to scholars of anthropology, sociology and politics with interests in nationalism, populism, the radical right and contemporary xenophobia.

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Nationalist Responses to the Crises in Europe
Old and New Hatreds

Cathrine Thorleifsson
To Ragna, Rikke and Tobias, for your enduring love and support.
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Writing this book has been the result of four years’ research. When I began the project on the rise of populist nationalism, the background was the economic crisis in Europe. I wanted to explore and compare the material and socio-cultural contexts in places where populist radical right (PRR) parties had obtained their electoral breakthrough. How did the global crisis affect local life worlds and what were the concerns and aspirations of supporters of populist nationalism? While I was conducting fieldwork in England and Hungary in the late summer of 2015, another ‘crisis’ affected Europe, the so-called refugee ‘crisis’. The influx of asylum seekers to Europe reached an unprecedented level with some 885,000 migrants arriving. That year alone an estimated 3,800 refugees and migrants lost their lives in the attempt to cross the Mediterranean to reach the shores of Europe. What was a humanitarian crisis and crisis of cooperation in the European Union, was framed in radical right discourse as a crisis of security and national identity for Europe.

Because social reality is never static, researching the way humans make sense out of their lives in response to contemporary forces and events is like researching a constantly moving target. Acknowledging the uneven speed and scale of accelerated change, this book thus attempts to analyse the rise and appeal of populist nationalism in response to the interrelated crises of economy and displacement. It uses social science perspectives on nationalism, globalization and identity, with original empirical material to examine how the boundaries of the nation are reconfigured by radical right parties, politicians and their supporters.

While an analysis of economic contexts and PRR discourses online has been key from a methodological perspective, this book could not have materialized without the generous time of all the people I have met in the course of my research for it. First, I extend my gratitude to the people I met in England, Hungary and Norway, for sharing their stories, experiences and for allowing me into their professional and private lives. In total I spent six months in the field, spending considerable time with ordinary supporters of anti-immigration PRR parties. While I have had previous experience living with people whose political convictions I do not necessarily share (my previous book was on nationalism in Israel and entailed fieldwork amongst
supporters of the radical right parties Likud and Shas), I was still anxious about access and how I would be received. I acknowledge that my own biography, as a 32-year-old white, female postdoctoral researcher from Norway, and middle class, affected my informants’ pronouncement. However, my outsider status might have gained me an enhanced level of trust and possibly the people I met felt less restrained in their discussions. Access was much less of a challenge than I initially had envisioned. People were largely not suspicious, and were open and eager to share their hopes, fears and concerns with someone who was interested in their lives and had the time to listen.

The role of being an emphatic listener – yet critical researcher – can be a difficult balancing act. While they might not agree with my analysis of the information they shared, I thank the leadership of the UK Independence Party (Ukip) and Jobbik – Movement for a better Hungary – for providing me with generous access to their conferences, meetings and campaigns. In England, I thank in particular Gawain Towler, Ukip’s former press officer, for giving me access to the Ukip conference, which gave valuable insights into the party culture and themes mobilized by political elites. In Hungary, I thank Jobbik Vice President Daniel Kárpát for allowing me access to the party’s campaign against migration. I informed him about the purpose of the study and obtained verbal consent to use his full name. I respected all key elite informants’ wishes to have their identity acknowledged or kept confidential, where the majority chose the former. I might have gained access to the parties owing to their belief that I would produce flattering party portraits. However, combining close interpretations of my interlocutors’ narratives and practices with a critical approach has been important from a methodological point of view. I have strived to let the people I met remain in focus without reproducing their nationalist discourses.

I express my sincere gratitude to Thomas Hylland Eriksen at the Department of Anthropology at the University of Oslo, for mentorship and support. In 2014, I became a member of his ERC Advanced Grant project ‘Overheating: The Three Crises of Globalization, or an anthropological history of the early 21st century’, together with colleagues Elisabeth Schober, Robert Piipers, Lena Gross, Henrik Sindig-Larsen, Wim Van Daele, Astrid Stensrud and Chris Hann. Eriksen’s theoretical visions combined with generous intellectual exchange with the research group has been a constant source of inspiration. The fifth chapter developed from a joint essay written together with Eriksen in 2017 and I thank him for his valuable contribution in thinking through key concepts.

I am grateful for the many comments and criticisms I have received presenting chapters at conferences such as the European Association for Social Anthropology (EASA) and the American Anthropological Association (AAA). Throughout the project, I have also benefited from ongoing conversations and fellowship with researchers at the newly established Centre for Research on Extremism (C-REX). In particular, conversations with Anders Ravik Jupskås and Cas Mudde have influenced my thinking. I would like to
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Abbreviations

AFD  Alternative for Germany Party
EU   European Union
FPÖ  Austrian Freedom Party
ISIS Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
LSE  London School of Economics and Political Science
MEP  member of the European Parliament
MP   member of Parliament
NGO  non-governmental organization
PiS  Law and Justice Party
PRR  populist radical right
PVV  Dutch Freedom Party
Q&A  questions and answers
SD   Sweden Democrats
Ukip UK Independence Party
Introduction
Rupture and resentment in twenty-first-century Europe

The last few years have witnessed a remarkable pan-European and transatlantic resurgence of nationalism as indicated by the UK’s decision to leave the European Union (EU), known as ‘Brexit’, and the Trump presidency. Populist radical right (PRR) parties have received unprecedented double-digit support on a Eurosceptic and anti-immigration platform. In 2017, Marine Le Pen made it to the second round of the French presidential elections. The Alternative for Germany party (AfD) won 13 per cent of the vote in the 2017 federal elections and in 2018 it was polling above the Social Democrats. In Austria, the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), a party with roots in fascism, has entered the governing coalition. In Hungary, the authoritarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has embraced ethnic nationalism, challenging the basic values and principles underlying both liberal democracy and the EU.

Adopting a critical ethnographic approach, this book examines the causes, dynamics and appeal of populist nationalisms in contemporary Europe. Addressing gaps in state of the art, the book offers fresh empirical data and much-needed insight into the motivations and concerns of supporters of the populist radical right. Drawing on multi-sited fieldwork carried out in England, Hungary and Norway amongst the voters and supporters of the UK Independence Party, Fidesz and Jobbik, and the Progress Party, it explores the various historical events, material conditions and socio-cultural contexts that shape resistance towards migrants and diversity. Examining multiple sites across countries, I argue that the rise and appeal of populist nationalism must be analysed in relation to increasing economic and cultural insecurities linked to globalization. Processes of economic and state transition, diversification and migration have affected states and regions unevenly. The uncertainties and societal ruptures associated with globalization have enabled the heating of populist nationalisms in local struggles over resources and recognition.

Analysing the practices and discourses of PRR parties and politicians, I demonstrate what tropes and themes the elite nationalists mobilize across national contexts. I find that although the PRR parties vary in history, ideology and orientation, they all frame migrants and minorities, particularly Muslims, as fundamentally threatening to national identity, culture and security. In particular, the current radical right externalization of migrants
from Muslim-majority lands as human waste or ‘exception populations’ (Agamben 2005) is strikingly similar across national contexts. The so-called refugee crisis has been exploited by radical right parties to fuel anti-immigration and anti-Islam sentiments. Le Pen, Orbán and Trump have all, through xenophobic electoral campaigns, marked Muslim migrants as the defining Other. Using nationalist rhetoric and imaginaries that reinforce a sense of threat, they warn against ‘illegal’ strangers who are invading the nation while presenting themselves as protectors of a nation and Christian civilization in danger.

While considering the part that political leaders play in shaping populist nationalism, I pay special attention to how these discourses and imaginaries are consumed or contested by ordinary supporters as they reproduce ethnic, national and racialized forms of collective belonging in their everyday life. This introductory chapter will present the main concepts, theoretical and methodological approaches to be used throughout the book. It also explores theoretical shortcomings in the state of the art and shows how a multi-sited ethno-methodological approach can reveal new insights into the appeal, dynamics and character of populist nationalism.

**Culture, economy or both?**

The chief focus of the book is on exclusionary nationalism that together with authoritarianism and populism are core features of populist radical right parties. Exclusionary nationalism, also referred to in the literature as nativism, is an ideology that holds that states should be inhabited by members of the native group (‘the nation’), and that non-native people and ideas are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017). Nationalism is the project to make the political unit, the state (or polity) congruent with the cultural unit, the nation (Fox and Miller-Indriss 2008). Nationalism operates through notions of an ‘authentic’ and pure nation that is continuously re-narrated (Bhabha 1990), re-imagined (Anderson 1991) and re-invented (Hobsbawm 1991) in relation to differentiated others.

While populism is a secondary concern of my analysis, as I use it intermittently the contested and slippery concept still requires clear defining. Following Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017), I approach populism as an ideology or political discourse which ‘considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups – “the pure people” versus the “corrupt elite”, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the “volonté générale” (general will) of the people’. Populism’s ‘thinness’ is a product of the vagueness of its core concepts which allows it to be combined with ‘thick’ ideologies such as socialism and nationalism (Mudde 2004:543, Urbinati 2014:131). For the sake of conceptual clarity, I will in the book define populist nationalism as the exclusionary and polarizing nationalism that pits morally ‘pure’ and virtuous insiders against a set of internal and external others who are depicted as threatening to the nation-state.
PRR parties’ gain of power calls for a thorough examination of the conditions that have led to their rise. Based on a review of the multidisciplinary literature across political science, sociology, history, cultural and media studies, and anthropology, one can define multiple general approaches related to the rise and character of nationalism in Europe and beyond. Scholars have shown how nationalism can emerge in response to the outcomes of globalization such as migration and diversification processes (Ivarsflaten and Gudrandsen 2014), global capitalism (Holmes 2000), the threat and actuality of terrorism (Jurgensmeyer 2003), and the spread of new information technology (Eriksen 2016, Wodak 2015). A major focus in the literature has been on the effects of neoliberal restructuring of capital accumulation and state transformation on the rise of nationalism linking the rise of anti-immigration PRR parties to working-class and gendered resentment of economic insecurity (Kalb and Halmani 2011, Pirro 2014, Rudgren and Ruth 2013, Hann 2015). Other scholars have critiqued the ‘losers of globalization’ thesis showing how supporters from a range of class backgrounds can be drawn to parties and movements propagating protectionist nationalism for a variety of reasons, including political discontent (Van Kessel 2011), resistance to immigration and diversification (Ivarsflaten 2008), the affirmation of identity, masculinity, personal loyalties and nostalgia for a past lost (Fangen 1999, Blee 2002, Kimmel 2003, Mudde 2007, Müller 2016, Hochschild 2018).

A growing body of research contests the weight put on material conditions. Indeed, it was primarily the left-wing anti-austerity populist parties (Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain) that used the sovereign debt crisis as an opportunity to reframe economic conflict in nationalist terms. The rise of the Swedish Democrats (2014) and Progress Party in Norway is not a direct result of the economic crisis, but can be interpreted in terms of the long-term tendencies undermining conventional parties in general and social-democratic parties in particular, the latter of which have plummeted across European contexts. Several scholars argue that cultural, and not economic, insecurity is the driving force of populist nationalism (Norris and Inglehart 2016, Kaufman 2018). Fukuyama, who predicted that liberal democracy represented ‘the end of history’, notes in the description of his forthcoming book (2018) that populist nationalism, said to be rooted in economic motivation, actually springs from the demand for recognition and therefore cannot simply be satisfied by economic means.

Despite the scholarly disagreement over what the main driving forces of populist nationalism are, what appears evident is that PRR parties have captured a segment of the population's fears and insecurities about the impact of immigration and increasingly ethno-cultural and religious diversity on identity (Wodak 2015), promising firm boundaries in the face of transnational flows of people and ideas (Gullestad, in Gingrich and Banks 2006:83). This
aligns with the findings from several studies that suggest that citizens feel threatened by migration, and are suspicious of or hostile towards ethnic ‘out groups’ (Goodwin and Ford 2014, Berezin 2009, Mudde 2007), perceived as posing a threat to the nation imagined as homogenous (Barker 1981, Gilroy 1987, 2000). The label of the ‘radical’ thus refers to the resistance towards immigration and the nativist rejection of diversity expressed at the (far) right end of the political spectrum (Akkerman et al. 2016).

A multi-sited study of populist nationalism

In the book, I argue that the resurgence and appeal of populist nationalism cannot be reduced to one single crisis and driving factor (culture or economy), but must be analysed in relation to the combined effects of the converging crisis of twenty-first-century Europe – economy, displacement, culture and identity (Eriksen 2016b). The outcomes of globalization such as the rise of global capitalism and growing inequality (Piketty 2014), mass immigration and demographic change, can be seen as constituting what Eriksen refers to as an overheating effect (Eriksen 2016). As a metaphor, overheating refers to the acceleration and intensification of global processes since the early 1990s. While change, development and progress have been hailed as positive ideals, Eriksen notes that there is ‘something new and sinister about the contemporary, speed, scope and scale of change today. The change is out of control and the (un)-intended consequences can be devastating’ (Eriksen 2016, 2016b). The rise of PRR parties can thus be analysed as political attempts to scale down processes of globalization, and seek cultural and economic protectionism against contemporary forces perceived as threatening.

The aims of this book are to provide theoretical insights and empirical knowledge on the thoughts, appeal, methods and goals of nationalists and how these are reconfigured in relation to the interrelated crisis of globalization: the crisis of economy and displacement. While these crises are global in character, they entail local effects and responses. The analytical focus is accordingly located to the space between discursive socio-cultural constructions and the actual material conditions on the basis of which they are constructed (Eriksen 2016).

In order to get detailed insights into the wide varieties of local responses to the interrelated crises of economy, culture and migration, I conducted ethnographic research in England, Hungary and Norway in 2015, in countries with differences in history, experiences with immigration and level of impact by the recession. I designed the research agenda to examine the dynamics of populist nationalism across multiple sites and societal scales, connecting individual experiences with the broader historical, political, socio-economic and cultural environment in which they are embedded. I identified the local set of conditions and circumstances conducive to the rise and appeal of populist nationalist discourses, and exclusionary myths and practices about minorities and migrants.
A central dimension of populist nationalism examined in the book is the so-called supply side – and what narrative strategies, imaginaries and discourses are propagated by PRR parties and politicians. Several scholars have demonstrated ways to study populist nationalist ideology based on an analysis of the discursive pattern of political texts (see Rooduijn 2014, Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011). PRR parties are eclectically synthesizing elements from different ideologies and traditions in local, regional and national resistance to diversity and migration, whether expressed in religious or secular, ethnic, national or gendered terms (Kimmel 2003, Yuval-Davis 1997). Feminist scholars have noted how discourses and practices pertaining to gender are integral to neo-nationalist ideology (Moghadam 1994, Yuval-Davis 1997, Kimmel 2003, Nagel 2010), and media scholars have showed how meaning from other transnational contexts reconfigure grammars of exclusion online (Fairclough 2003, Wodak 2015).

The examination of the discourses propagated by PRR parties and their supporters is relevant for understanding the appeal of their supply side. Moreover, examining practices and discourses can reveal some of the ways in which the populist radical right re-narrate (Bhabha 1990), re-imagine (Anderson 1991) and re-invent the boundaries of the nation. Through qualitative content analysis of data from discourses (Wodak 1999), I present evidence of what gendered, religious or nationalist tropes are mobilized by PRR parties. The parties I have researched are the UK Independence Party (Ukip), Fidesz and Jobbik, and the Progress Party. In addition I have analysed some of the discourse and practices propagated by the Sweden Democrats and the Trump presidential campaign as these parties literally entered my field site as collaborators of Ukip. I acknowledge that these parties and actors differ significantly in their origins and ideological orientation. The Norwegian Progress Party and Ukip are not nearly as radical as Fidesz or the ultra-nationalist Jobbik, shorthand for Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom—Movement for a Better Hungary, in Hungary, which both embrace ethnic nationalism. While the parties and political campaigns I analyse represent different ideological types and ‘degrees’ (Pauwels 2011) of the radical right, I suggest that they converge in their methods and concerns, in particular when it comes to how they frame migrants or minorities as threatening others to the nation. Materials for this research included myriad platforms such as party events, campaigns, manifestos, speeches and websites. In addition I have examined online materials and news articles that promote the causes of PRR actors.

Populist nationalist thought and practice are never static, but constantly adjusting to new transnational and global conditions (Gingrich and Banks 2006, Eriksen 2016), societal developments and critical events. Against the general background of globalized crises, new communication channels and technologies are used by PRR actors that contribute to the opportunity for nationalist mobilization. PRR politicians routinely make use of social media to promote their image and disseminate ideas or the ‘truths’ that they accuse mainstream media of hiding from ‘the people’. In the UK and Norway, I have analysed content in open-access social media platforms such as Facebook and
Twitter. Based on online fieldwork, I examine PRR discourses and narrative strategies, and how grammars of exclusion are reconfigured across time and space. While I use online sources to analyse what themes and imaginaries are mobilized amongst populists online, the book also examines the dynamics of nationalism as expressed and embodied in everyday life. Applying content analysis alone can run the danger of methodologically reifying a static description of social life, between practice and attitude amongst one group (rendered active and immoral) against another (passive, but innocent) (Jean-Klein 2001). What is recognizable as populist nationalism in the online communications of the radical right might not exist or have relevance on the ground.

Despite the substantial and growing scholarly attention given to PRR parties, conventional theorizing tends to ignore the so-called demand side of populist nationalism: the voices and concerns of voters. While macro-studies highlight the structural conditions and motives for large segments of populations, we know less about nationalist engagements in everyday life, impeding our understanding of its dynamics and appeal. While populist nationalism can be approached from above as an ideology or discursive pattern which claims to represent and protect the purity of the imagined nation, it is made and sustained by individual agency and has to be explored and unpacked in place, in the historical, political and social context in which it occurs (Knowles 2003:48, Twine and Gallagher 2008:6, Fox 2016). Opposing the supposition that populist nationalism is only discursively produced and institutionally imposed from above (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), I examine how it can be embodied as an intimate form of cultural practice (Herzfeld 1997), and cognitive framework (Brubaker 1996, Lakoff 2008) that is invoked and reproduced by social actors in everyday life (Skey 2011, Fox 2016).

While some studies focus on individual support for PRR parties (e.g., Rooduijn 2014), few studies are grounded in ethnographic inquiry, thus tend to be weak in theorizing local perceptions, strategies and variations. Note-worthy exceptions are Holmes (2000), Gingrich and Banks (2006), Kalb and Halmani (2011), and Teitelbaum (2017), which all offer insights into the motives and causes of radical right nationalist engagements. The lack of face-to-face engagement with the ‘real-life context’ of supporters of populist nationalism is notable, but hardly surprising. Few scholars want to invest the considerable time or establish the ties necessary for the ethnographic study of people who might expose values they do not necessarily share (Blee 2007:121). However, clearly we have to understand better the motivations and concerns of supporters of PRR parties if we are to better understand the forces challenging liberal democracies.

Underpinning processes of externalization of migrants and minorities is a popular emphasis on territorially based ideas about bio-social purity, culture and ‘roots’ in a particular land (Müller 2016, Gullestad 2006). The study of ideas about purity and the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion link up with central anthropological questions about how the boundaries of the nation are being drawn, enlivened, and contested (Barth 1969, Douglas 2005, Pelkmans 2006).
Following Fredrik Barth’s work on ethnic boundaries (1969), Brubaker (1996) suggests that we should focus on what social actors do, and how and when people identify themselves, perceive others, experience the world and orient their actions in national, ethnic or racialized terms. Ethnographic fieldwork, as the established approach and core of anthropology’s methodological toolkit, is well suited to investigate the everyday gendered dynamics, emotional mechanisms (Blee 2007, Hochschild 2018) and taken-for-granted foundations (Fox 2016) of nationalism that tend to be overlooked in conventional theorizing.

Addressing the gap in state-of-the-art studies, I conducted six months of ethnographic fieldwork to examine the motivations and concerns of supporters of the radical right. I conducted fieldwork in towns where PRR parties have obtained a double-digit electoral breakthrough, dividing my time between Doncaster (England), Ózd, Martonvásár, Budapest (Hungary), and Oslo (Norway). In all sites I was interested in how supporters conceive their selves and belonging in an era affected by fast, accelerated change. How did registers of perceived ethno-religious or economic threats shape identification, embodiment and encounters in everyday life? How was racism and xenophobia invoked, understood and expressed by its perpetrators? What were the various motivations for engaging with anti-minority or anti-migrant discourses? How did my interlocutors’ concerns align or challenge elite, political narratives? These were just some of the questions that guided my research.

Shared experiences and conversations over time are key to developing ease between informants and the researcher. As much existing scholarship has been distorted by an over-focus on men, I made an effort to include the concerns and motivations of female supporters of PRR parties. In all countries under investigation I spent time with a few key informants and their wider networks. I conducted semi-structured interviews and participant observation in multiple and changing day-to-day settings (home, workplace, public space, political meetings and social media). Fieldnotes were taken as the primary means of collecting data from observation. Another way I collected data on the nature and appeal of national populism was through recorded, semi-structured elite interviews with dozens of informants from different vantage points, such as national members of parliament and local PRR politicians and civil society actors. Finally, I observed political rallies and conferences. To ensure voluntary and informed consent of research participants, I obtained verbal consent. Besides elite informants who wanted to be identified with full names, I have assigned pseudonyms to informants for the purpose of anonymity.

The combination of qualitative data-gathering methodologies both online and offline enable the creation of a rich ethnography or, as Geertz (1973) has called it, ‘thick description’ of the demand and supply side of exclusionary nationalism. Moreover, combining ethnographic fieldwork with an analysis of discourses propagated by PRR parties will provide an analytical vantage point from which to observe the appeal, goals, methods and tensions of PRR actors. By combining methods we can also better understand the future directions populist nationalism might take.
The struggle over identity and recognition in overheated Europe

As the following chapters will demonstrate, processes of large-scale change since the early 1990s affected my interlocutors’ socio-cultural and economic contexts with a direct impact on their personal lives. Many of the supporters of PRR parties I got to know felt excluded from the circles of power and recognition, and that they had to protect or fight for their identity status and place in society. In the fieldwork I conducted in the post-industrial town of Doncaster, material conditions were conducive to nationalist populism. However, ‘overheating’ in Doncaster had less to do with the economic crisis in 2008 than the past three decades of economic transition and demographic change. The lower-educated working class felt vulnerable under a new economic reality where they had to compete with Eastern European labour migrants over low-skilled jobs. In Hungary, a country hit hard by the economic crisis and affected by migratory flows in 2015, the PRR parties Fidesz and Jobbik mobilized both the economic and cultural dimensions, arguing that illegal, Muslim migrants pose a threat to jobs, culture and Christian civilization. In oil-rich Norway, where the economic crisis of 2008 was less pronounced, protectionist discourses of the governing populist Progress Party were not primarily grounded in arguments about economy, but linked to concerns about cultural integration and assimilation and dominant ideas of Norwegian-ness. Indeed, the electoral support for PRR parties in more materially secure countries like Norway, Sweden and Switzerland suggests that economic conditions alone are an unsatisfactory explanatory model.

Whatever the different factors conducive to populist nationalism, what united my interlocutors, was that nationalism became a powerful source of identity in the face of societal ruptures. The nationalism propagated by the populist radical right had local appeal because it played on both fear and actuality of cultural and economic dislocation. In England and Hungary, Ukip and Jobbik strategically targeted the populations in deprived post-industrial towns, promising a regained path to idealized notions of citizens and community. The attraction of the parties was partly due to their ability to turn traces of nostalgically remembered pasts into a model for imagined better futures. Playing upon the fears and longings of a disillusioned and dissatisfied electorate, the PRR parties promised to protect the voters against threatening forces and reinstall a sense of social security. While many of my interlocutors expressed concerns about the impact of increasing diversity and economic competition on belonging and welfare, politicians translated these grievances into an elevated politics of fear that racialized and securitized migrants in the image of a threatening other. Despite clear ideological differences between the PRR parties I have examined and the fact that the parties operate in different geographical and political contexts, all deployed dystopian imaginaries of ‘crimmigrant’ others (Aas 2011) to reinforce the boundaries of the nation. PRR parties were quick to capitalize on the refugee crisis to boost popular support for their already hard opposition to immigration. Migrants from Muslim-majority lands were framed as criminal intruders, as collective threats to
national identity, culture and cohesion. The PRR racialized the (predominately white) constituents in deprived regions, moving them symbolically from the ‘neglected and forgotten’ margins of the state to the forefront of the nation in the image of its ethno-cultural defender. This appeared as a powerful formula to my interlocutors, many of whom already felt alienated from their government and a sense of being hurt by European integration and immigration.

When examining the links between economic and cultural crisis, immigration and anti-minority sentiments, it might be tempting to only do research amongst the white disenfranchised lower classes. After all, research shows that PRR voters are overrepresented amongst the male (increasingly female), (predominantly) white low-skilled lower-middle or working classes. However, only targeting working-class constituencies would be misleading. While Ukip drew most of its electorate from the older, less well-educated, white working class, the Hungarian Jobbik draws parts of its electorate from the young-generation and higher-educated urban middle class (Thorleifsson 2017). To flesh out some of the differences across countries and between supporters, I have strived to include participants of diverse age, gender, and educational and employment status.

Nationalism and anti-minority sentiments are sensitive topics to research. As an anthropologist, I set out on an open-minded quest to understand my interlocutors, rather than undermining their cause. I took their fears, grievances and concerns seriously without trivializing or denying the harmful effect of those who harboured racial or xenophobic resentment. With the exception of neo-fascists I interviewed in Hungary at a Jobbik rally, who openly embraced violence, I avoid the term extremist. As Teitelbaum (2017:7) notes, by calling nationalists extremists or deviant we might ‘be declaring ourselves privy to an ultimate reality – some particular state of heterogeneity and ambiguity inherent in the human condition – of which they are ignorant’. It is equally important not to essentialize nationalists. People can be xenophobic on one occasion, and cosmopolitan on another. Still, working over time with people whose political convictions I do not share, and at times witnessing exclusionary practices was emotionally draining. While the politicians I worked with joked that they had given access to a liberal researcher, I was rarely asked to explain my own political beliefs and, as such, largely avoided situations where my interlocutors would have been offended.

The structure of the book

The analysis I am presenting in the book can be summarized as follows. The first chapter explores the local history and set of conditions conducive to the rise of populist nationalism in the post-industrial town of Doncaster affecting the UK. Based on ethnography, interviews and archival research, the chapter shows how Ukip supporters, while being negatively affected by deindustrialization, strived to cope with and give meaning to the changes affecting their lives. Examining the tensions emerging out of the intersection of various scale-making projects over meaning, memory and identity, I suggest that the rising appeal of English nationalism cannot be reduced to neoliberal
restructuring, nor just the legacies of industrialism, nor to the passage of transition or global migration. It is all of these which constitute the Ukip code.

The second chapter moves from the level of everyday life amongst Ukip supporters in Doncaster to explore the populist nationalism propagated by Ukip politicians. Comparing the discourses propagated by Ukip with the Trump campaign, it shows how the figure of the non-white, (predominantly) Muslim migrant served to rejuvenate violent imaginaries of ethno-racial and religious-civilizational difference. The populist parties did not seek to reinforce national identity around a whiteness that was explicitly racially marked, but rather referred to culture grounded in (Judeo-) Christian civilization and, implicitly, whiteness as a basis of inclusion. Appeals to nationalism and cultural heritage were used to mask the extent to which anxieties over ethno-religious difference motivated reactionary politics.

The third chapter examines how the Hungarian PRR parties Fidesz and Jobbik exploited the refugee crises of 2015 to re-narrate the enemies of the Hungarian national. Following the theoretical lines of Bauman (2004), it suggests that the initial state securitization of migrants was not grounded in the logic of ‘human waste’. On the contrary, it was the hyper-instrumentalization of migrants as an economic threat that prompted their further racialization and dehumanization in the image of the ‘crimmigrant’ Other (Aas 2011). Through the securitization of migrants from Muslim-majority lands in far-right discourse and practice, the boundaries of an imagined Hungarian nation were reconfigured and reinforced.

Chapter 4 explores the way in which violent imaginaries of Sweden have been discursively constructed and used by PRR parties in Europe. Just as the figure of the alien ‘conceptual Jew’ or Muslim can feature in racist imaginaries as a threatening Other (Bauman 1989, Esposito and Kalin 2011), I argue that violent imaginaries of Sweden have emerged in radical right anti-immigration discourses, practices and narrative strategies. The chapter demonstrates how individual acts of violence are ‘transvaluated’ into violent imaginaries of migrants from Muslim-majority lands. What I term ‘the Swedish dystopia’ not only entails a message of alarm and warning. PRR parties use the trope of the Swedish dystopia in their call for action against the Muslim migrants and minorities.

Chapter 5 explores populist and nationalist discourses and practices directed at the Roma minorities in Norway and beyond. It shows how the widespread association of Roma with disorder and waste is a key feature of contemporary antiziganism. In discourse and practice, Roma have been marked as a threat to the ordered and disciplined body/nation, indirectly helping to re-invent the boundaries of national identity.

The concluding chapter revisits the main themes, offering some comparative reflections on the drivers, methods and grammar of exclusion of the populist radical right.
References


