The politics of affect

Perspectives on the rise of the far-right and right-wing populism in the West

Sindre Bangstad, Bjørn Enge Bertelsen, and Heiko Henkel (eds.)
With Douglas Holmes, Don Kalb, Nitzan Shoshan and Cathrine M. Thorleifsson

Abstract: This article is based on the transcript of a roundtable on the rise of the far-right and right-wing populism held at the AAA Annual Meeting in 2017. The contributors explore this rise in the context of the role of affect in politics, rising socio-economic inequalities, racism and neoliberalism, and with reference to their own ethnographic research on these phenomena in Germany, Poland, Italy, France, the UK and Hungary.

Keywords: inequality, neoliberalism, politics of affect, right-wing populism, the far-right

For the American Anthropological Association (AAA) Annual Meeting in Washington, DC, 29 November to 3 December 2017, we organized a double panel on anthropological perspectives on the rise of far-right and right-wing populism in Europe and the United States. The overall aim of organizing these panels was to shed light on what anthropology and ethnography may contribute to our understanding of these phenomena. Featuring leading anthropologists from both sides of the Atlantic, the second of these two panels analyzed the question of what role inequality have played and continue to play in the rise of these social and political formations.

The anthropological and other scholarly literature on affect is by now voluminous (see, e.g.,

Ahmed 2004; Massumi 2015; Mazzarella 2017; Navaro 2017; Papacharissi 2014; Skoggard and Waterston 2015; White 2017). By invoking "the politics of affect" in this context, we have as conveners and editors meant to signal our view that the current political tide, which to a variegated extent, but nonetheless significantly across many nation-states across Europe and the Americas, combine the intertwining of neoliberalism and right-wing populism, the mediated politics of a Debordian "society of the spectacle," and an "outrage industry," in some profound senses make a break with the post–World War II, liberal illusions (or indeed, delusions) about rational and deliberative democratic polities. This of course raises the perennial question

as to whether it was ever thus, so we also want to make it clear that "the politics of affect" in our view has long historical genealogies, that it has always been central to all kinds of political mobilizations in the name of "the popular will" and "the people" left or right, and that it has even played a central part in providing the grounding for the Western liberal politics of the post–World War II era which now seem an increasingly distant memory.

But we live in an age in which political anger seem to have returned with a vengeance (Mishra 2017). Across several nation-states in Europe and the United States, right-wing populism has recently thrived in the context of rising socioeconomic inequalities within Western nation-states, the likes of which the world has not seen since the Gilded Age of the early twentieth century (Piketty 2014). But the fact that far-right and right-wing populism have proved perfectly amenable with neoliberalism and corporate-plutocratic elite interests on both sides of the Atlantic should give us pause to reflect critically on the widespread liberal political science notion (see, e.g., Müller 2017 and Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017) of an intrinsic link between right-wing populism and "anti-elitism" and claims to speak for "the interests of ordinary people."

Sindre Bangstad: Welcome to this second of two roundtables at this year's AAA Annual Meeting that we have organized in order to shed light on what anthropology and ethnography may contribute to our understanding of the rise of far-right and right-wing populism in Europe and the United States. We first started planning this at last year's AAA Annual Meeting in Minneapolis, having been struck by the inevitable corridor and panel talk in the wake of Donald Trump's presidential election victory merely a week before this. One year on, there has of course been a virtual torrent of analysis, but it is still very much the case that public and academic debates on this have featured political scientists and sociologists in the most prominent roles, rather than anthropologists. Yet, we

are as anthropologists of course predisposed to think that anthropology and anthropologists do have something unique to contribute to these debates, not the least in the form of the detailed knowledge and insight into ordinary people's lives, ideas, and behaviors that other disciplines may not always provide us with.

Whatever the reasons for this may be—and anthropology's generally liberal, left-of-center orientation and predisposition to study people we "like" (Bangstad 2018) comes to mind as possible vectors here—we did find a paucity of relevant anthropological research on these matters. Arlie Russel Hochschild (2016) may be right to speak of this as a proverbial "empathy wall" that prevents us from engaging in seriousness with the life-worlds and worldviews of far-right and populist right-wing supporters. With a few exceptions (Teitelbaum 2017), anthropologists across the world generally seem to have reacted with a profound sense of unease or even outright hostility to the rise of far-right and right-wing populism in Europe and the United States. That sense of unease or hostility, which we as organizers admit to sharing, is no excuse to us devoting attention to these phenomena, and the people attracted to and by them (Shoshan 2016).

As any other social and political phenomenon, the rise of far-right and right-wing populism in Europe and the United States must be analyzed in their particular historical and cultural contexts, and requires multicausal and interdisciplinary approaches and explanations. It must therefore be stated at the outset that we as organizers do tend to think of the different emphases of these two roundtables—(1) what's culture got to do with it? and (2) what's inequality got to do with it?—as pragmatically artificial in the sense that we do not subscribe to either/or propositions when it comes to exactly where the analytical emphases should be and that we hope and encourage our participants and you in the audience to think of these emphases in conjunction, rather than in opposition, and to conceive of these two roundtables as speaking to each other.

As organizers, we will not offer introductory textbook definitions of what far-right and right-wing populism is and is not, or offer any introductory analysis of what relationship far-right and right-wing populism stand in in particular contexts, but rather leave it to our roundtable panelists to hopefully provide specificity, contextualization, and clarity with regard to some of these matters. The documentary filmmaker Michael Moore famously characterized the election of Trump as the "greatest 'fuck you' in US history," and we would suggest that a unifying factor in the rise of far-right and right-wing populism in Europe and the United States is a "politics of affect" that once more unsettles ideas about politics being a domain of reasoned democratic deliberation based on facts. From the extensive anthropological literature on affect, we also know that affect is social through and through (Skoggard and Waterston 2015).

One of the best anthropological monographs ever written by nonanthropologists is to my own mind James Agee and Walker Evans's meticulously detailed and self-reflective account of the lives of poor white sharecroppers in Depression-era Alabama in their 1941 classic *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men.* Of George Gudger, Agee writes:

> The only deeply exciting thing to me about Gudger is that he is actual, he is living, at this instant. He is not some artist's or journalist's or propagandist's invention: he is a human being: and to what degree I am able it is my business to reproduce him as the human being he is; not just to amalgamate him into some invented, literary imitation of a human being. (Agee and Evans [1941] 2006: 212)

Central to many mainstream liberal accounts of the rise of far-right and right-wing populism in Europe and the United State have been the idea of its appeal to the fabled "white working class" marginalized by globalization and deindustrialization and left with a sense of political disempowerment by the political domination of highly educated technocratic elites in many societies, as well as a sense of being threatened by demographic decline; loss of status and power in the face of immigration, which populist right-wing leaders across the world have made sure to link discursively to radical Islamist terrorism; and feminism. Though a proportion of white voters without college degrees clearly played a decisive role in Trump's election victory in the swing states (Lamont et al. 2017), we know of course very well from any number of analyses that the idea that the "white working class" explains Trump's election victory is a myth (Gusterson 2017). But it is of course a convenient myth, especially in center-liberal circles, since it provides an opportunity for these very same center-liberal circles to continue to stigmatize "white working-class" people as "deplorables" (Isenberg 2017) to deflect attention from the worlds made by neoliberalism since the 1980s, and center-liberals' part in their making, and to avoid talking about the fact that the rise in socioeconomic inequality continue to affect minorities and immigrants to a much greater extent than white working-class people.

According to economists, we are now in a "Second Gilded Age," in which socioeconomic inequalities within Western societies have not been so marked since the age of the Rockefellers, the Vanderbilts, and the Carnegies in the mid-war era. This is, as demonstrated by the work of Thomas Piketty (2014), the result of conscious decisions made by economic and political elites since the time of the "neoliberal revolution" (Hall 2012) under Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. For all our knowledge about the damage this does to the very social fabric of our societies (Desmond 2016; Putnam 2015), and for all our talk about opposing it, this development shows no sign of abating, even in the advanced Scandinavian welfare states in which we as organizers happen to live. There are, not the least here, more-than-sufficient signs to conclude that right-wing populism has become yet another useful instrument for an endlessly adaptive capital (Fassin 2018). Here, there is in fact a US-European convergence: though right-

wing populists represent themselves as the "voices of ordinary people," the actual practice of right-wing populists in power, whether in Hungary, Norway, or the United States, is often a close alignment with corporate and plutocratic interests (Pierson 2017). Is it the naissance of fascism? (Holmes 2016). Our panelists are likely to disagree on this, but there it at least a demonstrable historical precursor in that the rise of fascism in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s was in fact underpinned by several tactical alliances between corporate elites and an accommodation with conservatives (Paxton 2006).

The debate about how to understand the relationship between "race" and class, racism and inequality in the rise of far-right and right-wing political formations has been particularly hard in the United States in the past year. It suffices here to note the intense debate on the academic left over Ta-Nehisi Coates's (2017) latest book, for which he has been accused of ignoring class in favor of "race." With David Roediger (2017), we conceive of "race" and class as being co-imbricated and mutually constitutive. It is in this context of course important to note the very different permutations and articulations of "race" past and present in Europe and the United States. But it seems quite clear that far-right and right-wing populism in both Europe and the United States draws on an extensive reservoir of racist and/or discriminatory attitudes toward immigrants and marked minorities—and Muslims in particular.

In this roundtable, we ask what the rise of inequality in particular—but also other factors—has to do with the rise of far-right and right-wing populism, and how this might be connected to the "politics of affect" reenergized by the general disillusionment with and despair over mainstream liberal politics and political and economic elites. Is neoliberalism, globalization, outsourcing, and deindustrialization what we should be looking at in trying to understand all of this? And what is the relationship between right-wing populists, corporate and plutocratic elites, and the Far Right? I now leave the floor to our roundtable participants.

Nitzan Shoshan: Earlier this year, I received an invitation from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) to participate in an "election observer tour," an intensive 10-day journey of expert panels, street campaigning, rallies, and meetings with candidates, members of parliaments, journalists, and party strategists, culminating in election day—a tradition to which, for many decades, the DAAD has invited international experts on Germany. Toward the end of the journey, in Berlin's Prenzlauer Berg, we visited the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) house, an extensive space divided into thematic exhibits that combined audiovisual content, interactive interfaces, and artistic installations to boast of the party's achievements and chart its future path. One dome-shaped room allowed visitors to project their names and what Europe meant for them on a night sky ceiling. Some of my international companions approached the console, typed their names, and selected a word that, for them, represented Europe: understanding, tolerance, integration, hope, and so on. One of our German escorts, a CDU voter in her mid-forties, seemed particularly eager to get to the console and, when her turn came up, she scrolled down to the word *Heimat*, homeland or home in the sense of belonging. A *Heimat* constellation of stars flashed before us for a moment, while the console thanked her, as it did my Indian, Brazilian, Turkish, and Egyptian colleagues before her: "You are a part of Europe." Due to our tight schedule, I could not linger to watch or talk to other visitors. From the CDU house, we headed to a polling station. It was housed in a school, where three science labs on the ground floor hosted polling booths, a handful of officials, and the flags of Berlin, the Federal Republic of Germany, and, again, the EU.

Together with the politics of affect *in* Europe, often attributed to right-wing nationalism and populism, I'd like to suggest we must also consider the politics of affect *of* Europe. The notion of Europe itself and the orchestration of affective attachments of various sorts to its imaginary space have been central to political

discourse and electoral rhetoric in Germany and elsewhere on the continent, not only on the right-wing fringes or only in negative, Eurosceptic terms. It is notable that even a far-right party such as Alternative for Germany (AfD) has presented itself as pro-EU—if anti-euro.

Furthermore, it goes without saying that the notion of *Heimat,* with which the CDU house sought to make available and to induce a certain affective relation to the EU, has played a key part both in the rhetoric of established, moderate parties and in the dramaturgy of belonging of the young right-wing extremists I knew in the field. In the 2017 federal elections, the trope of *Heimat* was present everywhere but nowhere more prominently than in AfD propaganda. Thus, the CDU deployment of *Heimat* and other signifiers in order to interpellate positive affective attachments to "Europe," whatever the latter means (my Ukrainian, Russian, and Turkish colleagues did not appreciate their implied exclusion as "non-European"), allowed our German chaperon to trace the continent—more to the point, the EU—as a scale of belonging, a home.

Heimat serves here as a vortex that pulls in scales, slices and mixes them, at the same time that it indexes their differences. In today's Europe, I suggest, the continued relevance of *Heimat* and belonging gets folded into the relationship between the politics of affect and the politics of scale: in the interstices, at the points of friction and conflict, and in projects that seek to reconstitute social and political scales or manufacture new ones. Ethnography is perhaps especially well equipped for apprehending the contested production of affective scales as social facts. Indeed, anthropologists have written about the reconfiguration of scales (of governance, of belonging, etc.) in the process of Europeanization. But how do these politics of scale articulate with the politics of affect? And how do they reshape nationalism in general and the Far Right more particularly? What experiments in the affective politics of scale can we observe within nationalisms in Europe and beyond it?

This is the first point or set of questions I would like to put on the table. The second concerns the question of where, as ethnographers, we might fruitfully look for the politics of affect. To begin, I think we should look closely at several common stories about far-right nationalism that predominate political discourse and academic debates alike in much of Europe, and have served to guide both the public eye and scholarly interest. Let me pause here on two of these in particular.

The first we might term "the encroachment story." According to this narrative, right-wing extremist arguments penetrate mainstream, respectable discourses and introduce malignant ideas that find their way into electoral campaigns, legislation, policy, and the worldviews of "ordinary people." An anthropological perspective allows us to question this story. In the field, what gets classified as political extremism and right-wing populism in fact often seems to emerge from ideological (under) currents that elsewhere pass as innocently moderate. The young right-wing extremists I knew revealed themselves in their political outlook as not all that different from many of their compatriots.

At the level of policy, to take just one example, we need only consider the British (or, as Sindre often reminds us, Norwegian) response to the refugee crisis of 2015–2016—two European countries whose governments at the time most would not consider far-right populist—or the statements of socialist party boss Oskar Lafontaine in favor of "processing" refugees in northern Africa to see evident resonances with the rhetoric of Trump or the demands of AfD. In electoral campaigns, the blatant nativism of AfD propaganda posters is purposefully designed for shock value. But the election flier of the Greens candidate with whom I campaigned for a day on the streets of a Bonn suburb in 2017 also proclaimed that her family had lived there from time immemorial. What political purpose, we might ask, does this story of encroachment serve? How, in our research, might we avoid becoming complicit with its political agenda? How can we examine the limits and disruptions

of the commonsensical narrative to rethink our vocabulary and develop concepts that, rather than entailing a separation between the extreme and the mainstream, will help us find the former as already in the latter, as emerging from it and rooted in it?

The second story will be familiar to most of the participants in this panel. We might term it "the lumpen story." According to this story, far-right nationalism is an affliction of the dangerous classes, the disaffected, the vulnerable, to the lure of its affective politics. Thus, we hear of the depressed cities in northern France, the stagnant towns of eastern Germany, or the deindustrialized landscapes of the Midwestern United States as the grounds where all sorts of hate can be harvested with relative ease. Yet, we know, too, that the lumpen story is only a partial explanation, and only in certain cases, for the emergence of xenophobic nationalisms both today and historically. It was not the poorest voters but rather the middle- and upper-middle classes that handed Trump his triumph (Henley 2016; Statista 2016). The AfD candidate I met in Leipzig was the owner of a small hotel, and his rhetoric evoked German middle-class conservatism—*Spiessigkeit*—rather than underclass resentment or the revolutionary, national socialist rhetoric of the National Democratic Party (NPD) activists I had known in the field.

The lumpen story entails several risks. On the one hand, it is complicit with various other commonplace idioms that, especially under processes of neoliberalization, have criminalized the poor and have blamed the socially marginalized for all kinds of social ills. On the other hand, however, the correlate of the criminalization of the poor appears in the lumpen story as the victimization of the Far Right, of xenophobic nationalism as a sort of politics of the oppressed. Rather than viewing far-right nationalism as a straightforward class issue, we could do better, for example, by speaking of processes of dispossession, as Don Kalb (Kalb and Halmai 2011) and others have done, in which the perception of loss produces certain political effects. Understanding how such processes become affectively mobilized and linked up with far-right political imaginaries and agendas is an urgent challenge for anthropology. To do so, we should consider not only perceptions of loss but also expectations, hopes, and aspirations—in brief, affective attachments to certain futurities—as well as their correlates, fear and hate. The links between such futurities and right-wing nationalism are neither direct nor self-evident. It is precisely the sorts of affective politics that link the two that today demand new explanations. To begin to face this challenge, it seems to me that we will need to attend to broader discourses and wider national publics in which the state, for one, participates and which it propagates and incites (think here, for example, about the near universality of the political discourse of fear, or, in many European countries, of the wall-to-wall political mobilization of tropes of autochthony).

Don Kalb: My work on this stems mainly from the early 2000s. We as anthropologist were there very early. It is perhaps still useful to remind everybody that this is not a new topic for us: we were early, we saw it very realistically and clearly, and we projected from there. I refer here to the work of Douglas Holmes (2000), Jonathan Friedman (2003), Andre Gingrich and Marcus Banks (2006), and me (Kalb 2002, 2009; Kalb and Halmai 2011), among others.

Last week I was at the Fudan Institute for Advanced Studies in Social Sciences in Shanghai, and they wanted to know about illiberalism in Europe. I told them: it's the rise of China, stupid! Of course, if you say something like that, it needs a lot of explanation, but you all understand there must be a basic truth there, that it may require more specification, but that you have a world-level clue there that is relevant for a whole set of correlations. I open with this in order to make a point about how anthropology can matter in conversations about the rise of the Right. We usually retreat at once and say: we can do fieldwork and we can bring cases. That is true, and we need to do that, but it cannot be the whole story, because, if so, we are out of the further conversation. Now, of course I do not want

to suggest it is all reducible to the rise of China. This statement is about modes of theorization, which is an important topic for us, also in relation to making future projections of what might happen, of the wider process we are in, and for sticking out our neck. I am not saying we need to do it exactly like I do, but rather we need to be a little bit bolder about theory and aspirations toward theory, daring to universalize our insights and projecting them forward in terms of process, time, and space; this is certainly something we should learn better. We need to rise above the single case. Comparison is useful. But we should be ready to push beyond that.

So, in retrospect, it is not surprising at all that, in a period in which capital's globalized reach extended tremendously, popular sovereignty—and in particular, those historical political forces, political formations, in which the claim for popular sovereignty was most starkly invested, that is, social democracy in the broad sense of the term, and in all its national varieties—would necessarily be squeezed. We do not need to be surprised about that. It's all in the equation. So, in the end, the rise of the Right is really not the issue. In the end, the real issue, analytically, is the collapse of social democracy, and therewith of liberalism, and perhaps the eclipse of the Left more generally, though we also see important popular efforts at revitalization, along with those on the Right (see Kalb and Mollona 2018). I heard a lot about left and right yesterday. But we should not overlook the fact that the New Right is not the old post-1945 European dirty fascism anymore. They have re-incorporated the rich left-right amalgamations of earlier pre-1933 fascisms. I am thinking, for example, of the National Socialism of Ernst Strasser or the Action Française. I say National Socialism very explicitly here. But I do not think immediately about the Holocaust: it could also be Salazar in Portugal, and it is certainly Mussolini in 1923.

What has happened after 1989—or perhaps a little bit earlier, in the case of France, for example, where the electoral rise of the National Front starts in the 1980s—is the embrace by the emergent New Right of a claim for the protection of social rights by the state. What I take to be the New Right at the moment in Europe are everywhere national *socialist* right wings. They claim the protection of the welfare state for the national majority and for people of their own kind, and they use the invocation of fear of all sorts to establish it. Viktor Orbán and Poland are the purest examples. But even, for example, the Dutch New Right, which started out with immigrant assimilation as the key demand in the early 1990s, began under the racist Geert Wilders to make ever more explicit pro-welfare-state claims for autochthonous citizens. They were actually becoming electorally stronger when they emphasized such claims more explicitly than the Third Way social democrats were willing to do.

Now what matters, I think, is that for us as anthropologists, it is of crucial importance that we find ways to shift the public conversation. First, we should learn to be more historically informed and versatile about the notion of the "commons." This is not just a nice, contemporary, left-wing idea but deeply embedded in European and colonial histories with strong conservative and indeed sometimes viciously right-wing connotations and possibilities. The New Right is about the making of a particular, deeply hierarchical sort of commons, not an equal and open one, a starkly bounded and ordered one. The Right is not just, as sometimes seems the case in the United States, about privatization. Second, we should shift the conversation toward class rather than the mere technical data on inequality—class is a very complex thing. And class is not just about working classes; it is about multilevel power relationships in the context of capitalist globalization. Of course, capital is about relationships, but it is also about oligopolies, rent-takers, about new forms of hierarchy, et cetera. Since national states have become overly indebted everywhere, the state itself has become a rent-taking kind of actor. Our lives are basically drenched with sets of class-like relational mechanisms (see Kalb 2015). If we talk about class and livelihoods

and not just the Gini coefficient, we talk about basic social reproduction, on the everyday and the longer term, which is exactly what the New Right is doing and what the social democrats, beholden to expert economics as they are, fail to do. We need to really appropriate that vision: livelihoods, social reproduction.

Is this about ethnography? Well, the answer is yes, in a way. A stimulating example is Kristof Szombati's (2018) deeply informed processual ethnography of the rise of the anti-gypsy New Right in Hungary. He shows how important it is in a dynamic predicament such as ours to actually see processes over time and space happening. We want to see changes in livelihoods and in class-like mechanisms that structure livelihoods and territories, the skin-close modes of dispossession that they are fighting within and against. This is not just about experiences in and of life: it is also about how these experiences become publicly signified in the context of the rise of the Right and contentious politics. Margit Feischmidt told us yesterday that, right now, if you talk to people in southern Hungary close to the border of Serbia, they would smoothly reproduce the discourse of fear and of being overwhelmed by immigrants that Orbán has been feeding them. This, in a situation where there are basically no immigrants. Political process can be extremely powerful, and it is not just originating in the local places where we do fieldwork. Spatiotemporal improvisation is asked for—in methodology and in writing.

I want to leave you with this: In terms of theorization, we need to creatively reengage with the links that connect and separate Marx, Weber, and Polanyi. At a deeper level, the things we are talking about today are class confrontations in complex muted ways that happen and articulate differently in different spaces, by variable institutions, based on different prehistories. But they do happen to work more or less in sync and are deeply interconnected, different faces of the same phenomenon. In my work, I have emphasized Marx, but Weber is also important because this is not just about people within and against capital accumulation only; it is as much

about the defense of status, of "traditional" rights. This deeply anxious status production of working classes who imagine themselves as middle classes because they are educated, they are homeowners, and they have always done everything the state told them to do, is what we need to get a hold on. Polanyi, again, is useful paradoxically precisely because he was never clear about the exact mechanisms that produced counter-movements. The countermovement could be driven by the Right or by the Left, and he couldn't anticipate or explain which. This suggests that a renewed conversation between Marx, Weber, and Polanyi could be extremely helpful for our present purposes. In a context of the globalization of capital, it becomes ever more impossible for labor and social democracy to actually bargain with capital. It is ever less possible to actually enforce any imagined social contract. In other words, the movement of capital clashes ever harder with acquired status and with expected public promises of protection, as well as with modal, expected livelihood trajectories. And so class is turned into culture, and hierarchy comes forcefully on the agenda again.

Cathrine Thorleifsson: I arrived in Washington, DC, yesterday. I was born in DC and must say I am absolutely astonished that US President Trump has retweeted a British neo-fascist vigilante group just two days ago. I first came across this paramilitary vigilante group called Britain First during my fieldwork in the English town of Doncaster in 2015 where its leader, Jayda Fransen, was patrolling the streets searching for "criminal Muslims and gypsies." Leaders from the party had claimed that 2015 would be "the year of Britain First and the United Kingdom Independent Party (UKIP)," proclaiming "the UKIP at the ballot box and Britain First on the streets." While the UKIP leaders I interviewed strived to disassociate themselves from the fascist Right, Trump brought them to the limelight. I will return to the importance of transnational mobilization shortly, but first I will briefly outline my research methodology and questions.

In 2014, I began a project on comparative ethnographies of neo-nationalism, entailing fieldwork among the supporters of politicians of the populist radical Right in the United Kingdom and Hungary. Over the course of five months, I did multisided fieldwork among leaders and supporters of the UKIP and the Hungarian Jobbik—parties that represent opposite poles or different ideological types and "degrees" (Pauwels 2011) of the radical Right. Conducting fieldwork in multiple settings, from party conferences to the more intimate registers of everyday life, I explored the local conditions and set of circumstances conducive to the growing support for the radical Right.

And to the question we discuss today—as to whether inequality matters—well, my short answer would be "yes." For supporters of the radical Right I got to know in two postindustrial towns, many were "left behind" by processes of globalization and experienced deep economic insecurity. However, still I suggest that appeal of populist nationalism propagated by the radical Right cannot be reduced to one single driving factor (culture or economy) but must be analyzed in relation to how grievances associated with actual or perceived economic and cultural dislocation are racialized and how differentiated others are turned into convenient scapegoats for societal ills.

Today, I will focus on the UKIP case study. When I embarked on fieldwork in Doncaster in May 2015, the party had just obtained a quarter of the votes in traditional Labour Party land, so it went from 4 percent to 25 percent. To understand why the radical Right could obtain such figures in traditional Labour land, one needs to look at changes occurring the past three decades. In the late 1980s, Doncaster was a town of 18,000 people. In the early 1990s, the boomtown turned rapidly into bust as most of the coal mines shut down due to Thatcher's neoliberal restructuring program. And pit closures resulted in economic stagnation, deprivation, and spiraling unemployment. In tandem with the precarization of labor, Doncaster underwent rapid diversification processes, particularly following the 2004 enlargement of the EU. The part of society recovering from its dependence on heavy industry felt fearful and vulnerable in the face of a new economic reality where they had to compete with cheap labor from elsewhere. So, long-term existential insecurity coupled with rapid demographic change were conducive to the repositioning of identity politics. In Doncaster, community and self-forming symbols had for generations been tied to an industrial culture. In the space left by the dissolution of industrialism competing scale-making projects over recognition, resources and belonging played out.

Some of my interlocutors, in particular those from the older generation, were united in a nostalgia for the "good old days" and hoped a vote for Brexit would bring back the security traditionally afforded to them by the virtue of their Britishness, Englishness, and invisible whiteness. They felt alienated from a Labour Party they claimed had embraced a progressive consensus and the "champagne-socialist" political elites in London and Brussels who had forgotten the interest of the "ordinary" people. While the average profile of a UKIP voter is predominantly working class, white, male, and over the age of 55, the party attracted not only voters from this group. A minority of working-class Sikh and Hindu voters supported the party's anti-immigration agenda, both as a form of nostalgia for the British Empire and to secure their position within the British class and racialized hierarchy of belonging. Others were anxious about the alleged "Islamification" of Europe, a concern they share with supporters of radical-right parties elsewhere.

Offering a nationalist solution, the UKIP effectively tapped into the grievances of the dispossessed communities, addressing the postindustrial cultural, economic, and racial anxieties related to fast change. Moreover, the party structured feelings about one's future drawn from a nostalgically remembered industrial and imperial past. It promised to restore the greatness of the struggling town and to "bring back jobs." At the same time, UKIP politicians appealed to English nationalism, cultural heritage,

religion, and civilization to portray migrants, in particular from Muslim-majority countries, as existential threats to imagined sameness.

In September 2015, I did fieldwork at the UKIP's annual conference in Doncaster, where they launched the Brexit campaign. UKIP leader Nigel Farage claimed that Labour was "no voice for the workingman," and to massive applause, he entered the stage to the Swedish rock band Europe's "The Final Countdown" reflecting the message of the conference titled: "Out of the EU and into the world." At the conference, I followed Raheem Kassam, Farage's 28-year-old adviser. Kassam was headhunted by the far-right *Breitbart News* editor Steve Bannon to run *Breitbart*'s London office. Kassam introduced me to a female associate who worked for the Trump campaign in California. A Trump campaigner at the UKIP conference is illustrative of the close political ties in work across the Atlantic leading up to the Brexit victory and the Trump presidency. Moreover, these transnational linkages and contacts were instrumental in terms of both forming issues and action strategies. Bannon and Kassam advised both Trump and Farage to focus on Muslim migration and the alleged threat from radical Islam. While local kippers I interviewed in Doncaster primarily expressed concern over the impact of rapid economic and demographic change on their welfare and way of life, the party leadership elevated and inflamed these grievances through a politics of fear that enforced ethno-religious stereotypes (Thorleifsson 2018).

The 2015 UKIP conference coincided in time with the "refugee crisis," functioning as a critical event the radical Right could exploit to bolster political support. Several talks consisted of scaremongering on the issue of the allegedly uncontrolled continuing arrival of nonindigenous people to the United Kingdom. In a discourse conflating displacement with crime, particular Muslim asylum seekers were framed as threats to the national identity and security. A few days before the Brexit referendum in 2016, the UKIP exploited violent imaginaries of Muslim migrant men. Farage posed in front of a poster depict-

ing a queue of displaced Syrians accompanied with the title "Breaking point: The EU has failed us all" and the caption "We must break free of the EU and take back control of our borders." Grounded in a nativist logic of a pure and innocent civilization in danger, the UKIP Brexit campaign effectively nurtured imaginaries of hordes of foreigners who would overrun Europe and Britain, among them "rapists" and "ISIS terrorists." Moreover, mobilization of violent imaginaries of refugees and migrants served to reinforce the ethno-nationalist boundaries of the nation while strengthening the image of the UKIP as the solution to the endangered Western, "Judeo-Christian" civilization.

The UKIP racialized and dehumanized migrants and minorities in the image of the "crimmigrant" other while simultaneously essentializing the (white) working class as representing the "real and ordinary." At the Brexit celebrations, Farage declared in a populist tone "a new dawn and victory for the ordinary people," framing Brexit as a victory for ordinary people's fight against the establishment. The UKIP leaders moved the less educated working class from the structural margins of the nation to its forefront in the image of its ethno-religious and civilizational defender. And this seemed like a powerful draw for parts of the electorate in Doncaster who struggled to reconstitute identities in a fast-changing world.

Douglas Holmes: In late August 1987, I had conversations with two minor political figures. These were literally the final interviews of a project that spanned the previous decade, a project set in the Friuli region of Northeast Italy (Holmes 1989). I was very curious about these two activists, but I expected little substantive from the conversations. What I overheard were hints of a cultural politics that could *not* be aligned along a simple right-left axis: a politics at odds with central assumptions of political life of the late twentieth century. It was an inchoate politics in which the boundaries between politics and everyday life were blurred. That said, this strange way of knowing and experiencing

had an unsettling trajectory—a trajectory I had not anticipated.

Now we can give this activism a name: fascism. It is fascism with distinctive contemporary features that are not fully or necessarily congruent with its historical manifestation: a configuration of fascism with unusual and unsettling relevance for anthropology.

In the late-1980s, I faced the following question: How could political activists who articulated a compelling series of ambitions and aspirations—a politics that in many respects I admired—lead to something like fascism? Restated, how could people who were (absolutely) *not* fascist espouse a series of agendas that could animate something like fascism(s) of and in our time (Holmes 2016)? I employed the concept of "integralism" to straddle this contradiction and demonstrate how seemingly prosaic aspirations could metastasize to yield a European fascism (Holmes 2000, 2009). If what we are encountering is indeed fascism, we must address one overriding question: How and why have the most discredited ideas and sensibilities of the modern era—ideas that yielded the indelible horrors of the twentieth century—become persuasive, compelling even, in the new century (Holmes 2016)?

Over the past three decades, I have observed how the figure who personifies these aspirations shifted from the violent, racist thug (and their sympathizers) impelled by fulminating hatred to the far less obvious political figure who increasingly occupies the middle of the political landscape whose desires seem, at least initially, unremarkable. Specifically, I examined how marginal, self-limiting activisms were transformed to sustainable popular movements nested in the project of European integration. My current aim is to demonstrate how an ethnographic purview can provide a sustainable analytical approach: one that treats fascism as a *heuristic* device—rather than an all-encompassing definition—capturing this phenomenon as it is taking form with all its fugitive features and contradictory elements intact (Payne 1995: 3–19). Fascism is crafted by means of an intricate division of labor that is continental in breadth and scope.

In the 1980s and 1990s, I searched out idiosyncratic and isolated political activisms. The inquiry moved across three sites—again, Northeast Italy, the political and bureaucratic precincts of the European Parliament, and the urban districts of inner London—and with each episode of this research, the accretion of activisms toward fascism became increasingly evident. What was broached tentatively in Italy was given a European cast in Brussels and Strasbourg and endowed with racist fury in London. The ethnographic details recapitulated below have significance for the present, for an understanding of the political ecology of fascism. Now these activisms are pervasive; they are intricately networked, drawing on shared ideas and practices that resonate across the continent. From the vantage point of Europe, a continental fascism is in the making, which maps on to key elements of historical fascism (Sternhell 1987). What we are faced with, however, is not a fascism that is fully manifest (as yet) in a particular state; rather, it is a radicalism that has a European provenience (Holmes 2006).

Fascism in our time is emerging not as a single party or movement within a particular nation-state but as a dispersed or distributed phenomenon that reverberates across the continent nested within the political and institutional contradictions of the EU (Nolte 1966; Stark 2011). Rather than focusing on a particularly group to determine whether it is "fascist," we must look at how these factions, movements, and parties are linked together, in cross-border coalitions and alliances (see also the current research by Agnieszka Pasieka). If we do so, the political ecology of contemporary fascism and the intricate division of labor that sustains it are revealed.

Rather than extravagant public spectacles exalting atavistic forms of leadership, what has emerged is a recursive, *screen-mediated* fascism that orchestrates—with the aid of bots and trolls—the ways of thinking, feeling, and expe-

riencing of shadow publics networked in cyber space (Knorr-Cetina 1999). Via a ubiquitous technology, the intimate artifice of fascism is being produced and reproduced at eye level, attaining the features of mass movements capable of getting into the heads of a broad swath of the European public.

Heiko Henkel: This provides us with an interesting move from the first panel to the second. In the first panel, I thought the tensions and the different approaches were much clearer, and now in the second, where I would have thought we would have much more of a controversy, people are actually moving together. But I am quite happy you two sort of now agree to talk about a neofascism in this context. I was quite struck by Douglas saying, "Yes, we should talk about this as fascism," and clearly fascism is all about cultural identity and difference. And I think this is interesting, but I think when Don talked about fascism, he talked about something maybe related, but also quite different, and that is about escalating inequalities of capitalism. And are we—are you—talking about the same thing, or is that—can you maybe explain a little bit, what you mean here when you say, "Yes, certainly we all talk about the rise of fascism." And maybe the other panelists can step in and say, is this the right vocabulary, or what is happening here?

Douglas Holmes: I think there is nothing incompatible about those two notions at all. The couple of other things we should look at, if we look at this: there was a very vigorous historical scholarship that comes out of the 1990s about the origins of fascism. The more you read about it, the more unsettling it is. The more it looks like the present. And I think the thing that is different from my perspective is that we expect fascism to emerge and crystallize within one nation-state. I think we have a distributive fascism that is unfolding across Europe, and if we look at the various parts of it, we can understand the picture. That something is coming together.

And it looks like—it looks very much like—fascism. And it plays—it is able to experiment with all these ideas of class, of race, of identity, in a very, very—forgive me—creative way. Which is obviously very troubling. So I think this actually goes back to Don's original work in the Netherlands. And my original work in Northeast Italy—we both stumble on a kind of struggle that does not fit neatly into notions of "class struggle." Right, Don? And if something emerges out of that, if we realize that we both, simultaneously, although we didn't know each other at the time, but something was becoming pervasive across Europe—not just across Western Europe but also across Eastern Europe—and that it was a curious kind of background struggle that had never been fully acknowledged, and I think some of that is feeding itself, and I think this is why we are thinking this across many countries.

Don Kalb: Well, that is a very interesting point Doug is making. Let me be very short about this: so yes, while we were both discovering this highly wired complex of mechanisms—institutional mechanisms and relationships, sets of processes that are about constructing identities, and boundaries around the identities—my primary concern, and that is why I called my book *Expanding Class* (Kalb 1998), was that this was actually developing within an identifiable set of class contradictions over time that were unfolding; there was a logic there. So, my "expanding class" was about discovering class where you normally didn't think it was. That is what I'm still doing. That's also still what I think Doug is doing. We have a different approach to the same thing. So yes, I do not think it is different at all in the context of increasing class contradictions, and inequality if you like, but that is a very bleak term with which to talk about this. And again, it is about lived processes of a time and relational processes of a time, and you see relations can stretch globally, as you understand.

The concern with—well, it is very much actually Siegfried Kracauer, and you know, the late 1920s again. The concern becomes increasingly

one of redrawing boundaries and creating visible, institutionalized, state-regulated, state-protected hierarchies, and statuses within these hierarchies. In order to cope in a self-protective way with social chains, social change driven by capital and used capital accumulation in which the control of our lives and the social reproduction of territories, of societies, et cetera, increasingly slips from your hands, right? So that is the deeply fascist reaction, but it is also, let us say, the late Middle Ages, and the middle classes in the late Middle Ages, and I mean, the Holy Roman Empire was all about creating these sorts of mechanisms, and the EU is not so much different from the Holy Roman Empire.

But it is happening in a context—and that is what I also wanted to emphasize with the point about China—in a world context. This is entirely new. Well, liberalism has not come to be the leading global ruling class ideology, right? That is falling apart. The post-1945 world is just evaporating like this. So it is not just Russia, or just India; it is not just China. No, it is the system as such that is dramatically changing. And so, in other words, there are, let us say, very, very big global pressures toward the reinstituting of the classic dynamism.

Cathrine Thorleifsson: Yes, well, I think that at the heart of the various nativist and populist formations is a very dystopic view of globalization. Fearing the erosion of national identity and sovereignty. And that is why it can have some of these creative actors popping up and then using that language of neofascism to provide us with cultural economic protectionism. But I think we need to be very cautious in this sort of terminology because lots of the people I worked with were far from—you know, they were not neo-fascists, they were actually articulating their concerns related to material conditions, job insecurity, too many children and grandchildren, and so forth. But then going back to Jayda Fransen, suddenly you have a real vigilante group, and a neo-Nazi one at that. A small, tiny group of 53 people, insignificant in every respect, but that gives traction online with

millions of followers. So, we need to also then examine these global flows of ideas. And look at, you know, the level between lived lives and lived experience, and how then people might sometimes also attach their lived experience to these global flows of ideas. So—is this fascism or is it not? I think it is—if you think of fascism in Roger Griffin's (1993) terms that a society has become decadent by the forces of globalization and need to rise up from the ashes through national purification and rebirth, then obviously there are fascist elements in the ideology of some of these actors. But I think the interesting part is actually how the mainstream touches the extreme and vice versa.

Don Kalb: What I liked very much about the panel yesterday was this move away from talking about the extreme right. Because the whole concept of "the extreme" is a liberal political science context concept, and I think we increasingly talk about, you know, "protectional majorities" rather than "extreme black blocks" or these things. That is important, and in my own experience, when I was talking to people in the late 1990s and early 2000s in Poland, whom I deeply respected as persons, so these are not stone-throwing idiots—what I was when I was 20 years old—they were very respectable citizens.

Douglas Holmes: I think we thought of the neo-Nazi in the United Kingdom as the skinhead. I think now the fascist is very much a normal kind of figure that need not have a kind of extravagant behavior or comportment of the fascism we imagined in the past. And again, if you look at the history of fascism, there are respectable intellectual traditions that were feeding it. And that were in fact very close to what informs anthropological work.

Nitzan Shoshan: Yes, of course, I agree completely with this last comment by Douglas, and I think in Germany it has been a very noticeable change of the far-right scene, and for a couple of decades now, at least, the skinhead is not a prototypical far-right person, and people in the

United States are recognizing that these people do not dress and walk and talk so differently from others. This is something that Germans and Europeans have been struggling with for a bit longer. So, I am not going to talk too much about fascism versus neofascism, which is another term that might help us maybe capture some of the differences, too, but these are definitional issues; we are not going to get into that. I think it is important to think, in relation to fascism, and the rise of fascism historically, that the roots may have been there, the political circumstances played an important part, the economic circumstances played an important part, but the other thing that played a huge part is the rise of mass media. And I think if we want to think beyond questions of race, class, economics, about what is happening in the world today, we need to think about what's happening with mass media today. It has changed. If we want to think about the dangers of fascism in the United States, for example, we all need to think about neutrality and what that means for mass media nowadays. I think that is an important point that is usually not talked about too much. And the other thing is that I am a bit hesitant toward—fascism, to me implies, especially early on, a strong socialist component. I am not sure we are seeing that across the board in Europe today. I think about Germany—it is simply the example I know best—but I think you can find it elsewhere. There has certainly been a move, a shift, to the socialist left of the far-right in the aftermath of reunification in order to appeal to sensibilities of social justice in former German Democratic Republic territories. And at the end of the day, the far-right hasn't ever really made significant political gains; the only gains are at state level and even that not for long. The AfD is a much more liberal-conservative economic party, and it is the third-largest party in Germany, with a platform that is relatively economically liberal and right wing. So it is difficult to generalize about, at least about some of these things. I am not saying there is not that aspect of it; certainly with the NPD we saw that, and with maybe the National Front to some extent we see that, coming from the economic right, and sort of moving slowly left. How—so again, it brings me to my question, the question for me is—how economic processes become meaningful? How are they interpreted socially? How are they socially mediated, and how are they politically orchestrated? And that is what we need to focus on—beyond the economic processes themselves, which could result in a whole range of scapegoats, or not. And who the scapegoat is, that is not a given in advance, so, you know, I am thinking just in Germany right now, you cannot compete with this example; it is the most successful, these were the most successful federal elections for the far-right in a time in a Germany that is as prosperous as it has not been for decades. So, that is where the economic determinism is problematic.

Sindre Bangstad: I would thank all our distinguished panelists, not only in this roundtable but also in yesterday's roundtables. This is part of an initiative that we hope to develop. On behalf of us as organizers, we've done this with every intention of using this platform for publications. So, the first agenda would be a special forum, which we hope to see materialize over the next year. Let me also take the opportunity to thank all those who have contributed to this discussion from the audience. We certainly found a lot of these discussions, and the interactions with the audience, extremely productive. And finally, I think it's fair to say we never thought we'd get to a point where we could, sort of, conclude with an absolutely shared consensus, but that was never the intention in the first place. So, in that respect, I think we must declare this a quite successful event.

Sindre Bangstad is Researcher at KIFO (Institute for Church, Religion, and Worldview Research) in Oslo. He has undertaken ethnographic fieldwork among Muslims in Cape Town and Oslo. Among his recent monographs are *Anders Breivik and the Rise of Islamophobia*

(2014), *The Politics of Mediated Presence: Exploring the Voices of Muslims in Norway's Mediated Public Spheres* (2015), and *Anthropology of Our Times: An Edited Anthology in Public Anthropology* (2017).
Email: sindre.bangstad@kifo.no

Bjørn Enge Bertelsen is Professor in the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Bergen. His research includes political anthropology, egalitarianism, cosmology, and urban Africa. Recent books include the monograph *Violent Becomings: State Formation, Sociality, and Power in Mozambique* (2016) and the edited collections *Crisis of the State: War and Social Upheaval* (2012), *Violent Reverberations: Global Modalities of Trauma* (2016), *Critical Anthropological Engagements in Human Alterity and Difference* (2016), and *Mozambique on the Move: Challenges and Reflections* (2019).
Email: bjorn.bertelsen@uib.no

Heiko Henkel received his PhD from Princeton University in 2004. His dissertation and subsequent work explored elements of the Islamic tradition, especially the form and significance of formal and informal rituals. He currently works on the entanglements of national civic traditions, governmental regimes, and religious traditions in Denmark and across Europe. As Director of Studies of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Copenhagen, he is also interested in curriculum reform and the future of anthropology.
Email: heiko.henkel@anthro.ku.dk

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