

ORBÁNISM

The Culture of Illiberalism in Hungary

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The 2016 election victory of Donald Trump and the UK referendum on 23 June 2016 to leave the European Union (Brexit) both signal tremendous alterations in global politics. What really connects these international changes to the steady popularity of Viktor Orbán in Hungary? This article describes how a newly emerging and growing transnational political process known as illiberal democracy has influenced Hungary and other states since the late 1990s. By utilizing fieldwork materials from the mid- to late-2010s, it is asserted that both the process of Brexit and the election of Donald Trump have boosted not only the legitimacy of extreme right but contributed to the solidification of illiberalism in Hungary.

Keywords: Brexit, Hungary, illiberalism, populism

Introduction: Fieldwork Context

In a regional town of Hungary where I live I was sitting with some friends in a coffee shop when suddenly the wife of my cousin jumped up and said she had to go and buy bread. Her husband, a self-made entrepreneur, immediately protested that she should not go to any of the Albanian bakeries. She reinforced him with comments about the questionable quality of the bread, especially the “unknown origin of ingredients used” as well as the “unhygienic sanitary condition” of the bakeries. Then my cousin explained that when Albanian bakeries opened a few years ago they had gone to check it out to validate the proverb *új seprű, jól seper* (a new broom sweeps the house clean). Soon, however, they concluded that the bread was not “clean,” but was “stinking of something.” “You know, they don’t make the bread as we like it here. They just want to make easy and

fast money, and then get-the-hell-out-of-the country,” my cousin finished.¹

In the past two decades I have been conducting fieldwork in two localities in Hungary: Budapest’s 21st district, known as Csepel, a long-time industrial neighborhood of the nation’s capital; my home-town Lajosmizse and its environs in northern Bács-Kiskun County, about 70 kilometers south of Budapest. The latter is an agro-industrial region, and most of my informants have been small- to middle-size farmers and entrepreneurs. In both locations, I have conducted follow-up interviews with informants’ family members whom I befriended already in the 1990s, in general practicing what has been known as anthropology at home.² This notion has, as Ulf Hannerz argues cogently, its vicissitudes as well as limitations – a mixing of the personal, professional and the collective (2010: 98). Knowing intimate

details of individuals and families for more than thirty years has both its advantages and disadvantages. Adam Kuper's notion of practicing "nativist anthropology" is one of its dangers, yet its "cosmopolitan" (1994) version may be anchored to theoretical solipsism. With that in mind, I have attempted to unpack and compare local responses to national and international processes, especially changes brought to family and community lives as Hungary joined the European Union (EU) in 2004. Being a Hungarian citizen myself, I have been keen to observe how participation in national and local politics signal changes in values, political affiliation and participation in rural and urban communities. As the above conversation illustrate, informants in the early 2000s realized their home communities were "flooded" (informants referred to this as *elárasztottak minket*) with Albanians who opened their shops not only in Lajosmizse but elsewhere as well.³ Hungarians do not generally know much about Albanians; there has been a somewhat racist type of jokelore about Albania, a remnant from the socialist era (shoddy goods and ignorant residents of that country, etc.).

Thus, when seeing the first Albanian stores open, Hungarian reactions ranged from utter bafflement to dubious hesitation as most people remained loyal to Hungarian bakers and their produce. By the first years of the 2010s, however, the number of Albanian bakeries had dropped significantly in Lajosmizse to one, and in 2016 the last Albanian bakery closed. Similar occurrences happened in various districts in Budapest in general, which prompted me to ask: what was the reason for this rapid change? During the years 1998–1999, many Albanian families fleeing the war in Kosovo settled in Hungary receiving temporary residency and work permits. Under the sway of global economic forces, especially after Hungary's accession to the EU in 2004, small Albanian shops, mostly bakeries and fast-food restaurants selling kebabs, gyros and pizzas, suddenly mushroomed all over the country. It took about ten years or so when these migrant families decided to leave Hungary searching for better economic possibilities in the Western part of Europe. By 2015, the topic of Albanian bakers and their stores rarely found their

way into everyday conversations because a subject of new gossip and heated debates had sprung up: how to keep migrants and refugees out of the country.⁴ That was the year when IOM (International Organization for Migration) and UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) estimated that altogether almost two million migrants arrived in the EU. Roughly about half of those crossed through Hungary causing an entirely new wave of virulent forms of hate, racist discourse, and xenophobic neo-nationalist rhetoric that have, to be sure, changed the tapestry of Hungarian politics and society.⁵

In this article, I analyze this development by highlighting the political transformation in the wake of EU accession and the way in which populist politics has led to the victory of and the maintenance of power by Viktor Orbán and his party, that resulted in creating a new state and political culture based on fundamentalist Christian values and illiberal democracy. My main thesis is that populism should be understood as a combined political, cultural and economic phenomenon, and not strictly a side effect of mismanaged economy as has happened in so many approaches to populism in Hungary and elsewhere (see, e.g., Toplišek 2019).

The Rise of Illiberal Democracy in Europe and Beyond

Looking at the international metamorphosis of the last decade from an East-Central European perspective, it should be stressed that the 2016 election victory of Donald Trump and the UK referendum on 23 June 2016 to leave the European Union (Brexit) both signal tremendous alterations in global politics. In terms of Eastern Europe, a similarly profound step was the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine by the Russian Federation in February–March 2014. What really connects Brexit, the election of Donald Trump, and the steady popularity of Viktor Orbán in Hungary is the newly emerging and growing transnational political process known as illiberal democracy (Wilkin 2018). While in the first years of the 2010s, the general consensus among Hungarians was that the extreme right party (*Jobbik*) would force the ruling *Fidesz* (acronym for Alliance

of Young Democrats) out of power and gain an upper-hand in national elections, by the mid-2010s, it became clear that extremism, Christian fundamentalism and authoritarianism had become firmly entrenched in the ruling government's policies (Becker 2010; Fekete 2016; Hegedűs 2019; Kürti 2015a, 2019).

What unites the American, the British and the Hungarian governments is the rhetoric of nationalism and anti-immigration coupled with right-wing agendas to transform the economy, society and international relations, rejecting multilateralism. All of these are anchored to resurgent right-wing political agenda that seems out of sync with the world of increasing global flows of populations, shifting geopolitical and military realignments, and rising ecological concerns. Trump's election victory has as much to do with disgruntled working-classes as with power elites, with both groups internalizing the populist political message (Dodo 2016: 59). In the case of Brexit, lower-educated, older and conservative whites tended to support the leave campaign (Alabrese et al. 2018). Pointing to an extremely fractured and divided nature of society, it has been the religious rural population in Hungary that continues to vote in large numbers for the right-wing Fidesz party since 2010 (Vida & Kovalcsik 2018: 24). In general, this identification with the right and total rejection of left-liberal views (including the Greens) can be seen as a concurrent backlash against EU-liberalization and two decades of mismanaged Europeanization resulting in increasing inequality between rich and poor, rural and urban, and labor and capital – a process similar to elsewhere in the world (Scoones et al. 2017). It is the case that with Trump's politics at home and internationally, and the somewhat confusing Brexit negotiations with the EU, "populism is no longer a regional but a global phenomenon that needs to be studied through comparative terms in a global context" (Aydin-Düzgüt & Keyman 2017: 3).

Twenty years ago, Fareed Zakaria described the central issue of illiberal democracy: "Democratically elected regimes, often ones that have been reelected or reaffirmed through referenda, are routinely ignoring constitutional limits on their power and

depriving their citizens of basic rights and freedom" (Zakaria 1997: 22). At that time, the main examples were Pakistan, Peru, the Palestinian Authority and the Philippines, but it has taken a little more than a decade since Zakaria's premonition for the conditions of illiberalism to take hold so openly in an EU member state, in this case Hungary. It is feared that countries such as the UK, long known for its liberal democracy, may take up this illiberal track of state populism based both on authoritarian and nationalist populism observed also elsewhere (Gusterson 2017; Mertes 2018; Scoones et al. 2017).

In contrast to Donald Trump, who entered politics as a billionaire businessman, the Hungarian prime minister, born in 1963, entered politics during the late 1980s as a liberal university student ready to dismantle communism.⁶ Just to see how malleable Fidesz has been under his rule in the past two decades, it serves to recall that the party in 1988 was named Alliance of Young Democrats, only to change its name in 1995 to Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Party. Becoming the youngest prime minister in Hungary in 1998, Viktor Orbán's political credo has progressively shifted toward anti-liberalism and Christian fundamentalism. In 2003 he initiated other face-lifts: the now named the Fidesz-Civic Alliance Party formed a coalition with the Christian Democratic Party. These name changes not only indicate the high-political quagmire in Budapest, they also signal the capability of Fidesz elites to renew themselves. Underlining this brief political history is the failure of the left-liberal elites to see that the success of Viktor Orbán, both within the borders of Hungary and without, has at its base the concern and prospect of creating a new nation-state. It was just after the lost election of 2002 when Orbán realized this and embarked on his new agenda. First, he built a large rural network all over the country by creating local cells called "civic circles," a move closely paralleling the formation of the Eurosceptic League of Polish Families in 2001 in Poland. I happened to be at several of such local "civic circles" rallies and looked rather skeptically at the crowd. With few political speeches, people enjoyed games, concerts, and barbecues, the entire events exuded a country-fair

atmosphere. Banal as it may seem at first, the overriding message was simple enough: togetherness, community spirit and civic-alliance. In less than a few years, such civic-circles dotted the Hungarian landscape with more and more issues raised; local celebrations were tainted with political agitation, speakers extolled the virtue of family life, Christian ethics, patriotism, and family farming.

Orbán's attempt at renewing Hungarian society writ large paid off since rising to power the second time in 2010. He has carved out a name for himself as a self-made populist maverick. This new stardom can be credited to his fashioning a new statehood embodying populist illiberal democracy.⁷ He did not invent either populism or illiberal democracy, but he has certainly been a man of his time, starting at the very moment of European integration/disintegration following the collapse of the Eastern bloc. He has managed to continually ride on waves of anti-EU and anti-liberalist sentiments. Seeing some anti-globalist demonstration he victoriously uttered: "See, not everything is going well in the West, why should we simply follow them?"⁸

On the Concepts of Illiberalism and Populism

Hungarian populism has some of its roots in the experimentations of the 1930s and 1970s in various national contexts and internationally; its structure, ideology and nationalist programs parallel earlier American agrarian, Argentinian working-class and Russian nineteenth-century (*narodnik*) populist movements. Today, however, Hungarian populism is unlike the inter-war Hungarian agrarianism, but refers to both a political idiom closely associated with right-wing authoritarianism, minority diaspora politics, Christian fundamentalism and concomitant corporate governmental policies. One of its characteristic differences from other European populist political culture is what Attila Ágh has described as "hard populism," or populism from above, "a strong elite rule transforming the basic social, economic and political structures, and colonizing the civil society" (2016: 26). Therefore I do not agree with those who suggest that populism is a "thin-centered" world-view addressing "only part

of the political agenda," as Cas Mudde argues, or that it is "an empty form of articulation," as Emilia Palonen would have it (Mudde 2017; Palonen 2018: 4). Mudde moreover wrongly suggests that "populists, with some exceptions, do not make policies" (Weingärtner 2017). Nothing could be further from the case of illiberalism in Hungary: the government of Viktor Orbán has been recognized worldwide not only for its flood of political slogans but for the implementation of key policies with regard to education, media, health, pronatalism, public utilities, and public constructions.

Analyzing recent Hungarian developments, both nationally as well as locally, it is fairly easy to contend that populism is both a political logic and policy agenda, a combination that often but not always has disastrous results. Actually, the problem of Hungarian leaders has been not the lack of responses to social and economic challenges, but, on the contrary, too many swift and radical responses more often than not by targeting key social groups (youth, elderly, farmers, health workers, etc.). An example will suffice: since January 2013 the right-wing government in Hungary initiated a new utility-bill policy that for thousands of families meant a tangible amount of money was saved.⁹ Monthly utility bills highlight the amount of money households are purported to be saving on gas, water and electricity bills, and this has a greater impact on people than posters on billboards and slogans on nightly news.¹⁰

Just how the new populist ideology and practice supplement each other harmoniously may be witnessed in the statements of informants. A farmer expressed: "I haven't received any subsidies from the communists previously, now the Orbán government is making sure we can have fire-wood during winter." "There are more kindergartens and crèches today than ever before," argues one director of a local crèche in my town. An acquaintance of mine, who is a physician, reveals his anti-EU sentiment: "Why should the European Union dictate to us what to do and how to spend our money? They want to help African and Asian migrants, why don't they help us if they have more money to spend." An editor of a county newspaper vehemently argues: "It is good

that Orbán took care [got rid of] of the liberals, the *bibsi* [Jewish] and the left-over communists in the national and municipal offices. It should have been done immediately, as the first prime minister József Antal said in 1990.¹¹ A farmer expresses his feeling the same way: “Look, I receive subsidies to work on my land from the EU, not because they happily want to distribute it, but all because of Viktor Orbán.” A Roma father in his early forties with three children has this to say: “I have been out of work for almost seven years, when the meat-factory closed in this town and many of us were kicked out. Now, with this new ‘public works program’ (*közmunka*), I am working again. While it’s true the money is less than what I made before, at least I have a job.”¹² In addition to the oft-mentioned nationalism, xenophobia and a general fear of globalization, such statements are informative about not only how people feel about governmental policies but also about how citizens have diverse considerations for voting for the right-wing government party.

The Nature of Illiberalism

In 2014, Orbán had laid the foundation for his idea of “illiberal democracy” before an ethnic Hungarian audience in Romania. In that speech he envisioned a new national chronology in which 1989 was not the starting year, with the triumphal dissolving of the communist state, but rather 2003 when a referendum decided that Hungary would join the EU. Only 45 percent of eligible voters casted their votes, and while three millions voted in favor of joining the EU, 600,000 people voted against it – a result revealing anti-EU sentiments among a fraction of the population. Orbán commented on the weaknesses of the Western system, including its untenable ideology or liberalism. Its values regarding sex, corruption, violence, pluralism, and secularism are all unacceptable in a Christian state. Moreover, he called attention to those internal enemies, mostly civil society activists and the non-governmental sector, both supported by outside forces working to Europeanize and liberalize Hungary (Korkut 2012: 15–18). They are seen as working for liberal leadership undermining Hungarian national interests while the future of Europe

should be in the hands of illiberal states led by strong statesmen. A former newspaper editor in Csepel for instance believes that saving the nation from foreign take-over, whether in international trade or by the influx of foreigners, “can only happen and be achieved by a strong leader, who is not afraid to confront the European Union.”¹³

In today’s Hungary slogans of illiberalism are invariably used with the prefix of “anti” – anti-Brussels, anti-International Monetary Fund, anti-globalization, anti-multiculturalism, anti-Muslim, anti-Americanism, anti-Roma, anti-George Soros. Andre Gingrich has also identified globalization as the main culprit: “From a wider point of view, EU enlargement and integration may be seen as both a variant of, and an adaptation to, the current phase of globalization, whereas the rise of racism, xenophobia, and neonationalism in Europe is a powerful reaction against it. Everywhere, these wider tendencies interact with varying local factors” (Gingrich 2004: 174). This is certainly valid and it could explain how and in what ways the collapse of state socialism brought havoc in Hungarian society despite the early promises of independence from Soviet domination, multi-party political representation, free elections and democratic governance. Immediately after 1990, the realities of unemployment, poverty and unbridled venture capitalism in the wake of closed factories and state farms, botched privatization and restitution, were instantaneous and overpowering. Populist demagoguery was the order of the day during the tumultuous 1990s, as political leaders, both left and right, made unrealizable promises to the working classes (Greskovits 1995). While it is certain that globalization is one of those currently fashionable key concepts, it begs the questions: What is globalization? What affects racism, xenophobia, and nationalism in Europe exactly? And first and foremost, how? For anthropologists there are many further questions: How do we experience globalization on the local level? How has it altered our community life? And, finally, how do we connect local level responses to national or even global processes? These are the real questions anthropologists must answer because we are the ones who supposedly

know our communities and locals intimately. And this is where anthropological insights from the local level may shed light on the workings of populist nationalism as experienced by ordinary citizens (see, e.g., Inglehart & Norris 2016).

Populist Narratives

The decade and a half combined in office makes Viktor Orbán the most successful national populist at the moment in Europe.¹⁴ Despite his eccentric and brash views, often paralleling those of Donald Trump, he is head of a member state of the EU and, to top that, through his policy of “Eastern openness” he has befriended Russia’s Vladimir Putin and Turkey’s Recep Tayyip Erdoğan by developing a closer political connection with them than any other Western leader. Because of his Eurosceptic nationalism, Orbán has been called many names: “authoritarian,” “dictator,” “Putinist” and “populist,” and at the same time he has been compared to politicians as diverse as Donald Trump, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Vladimir Putin. His conservative party Fidesz has been compared to political parties such as Britain’s Tories, France’s National Rally and Spain’s Podemos, yet these are not in control of the state, not even their respective parliaments. In recent years, Orbán modified the country’s constitution, and the new Fundamental Law (formerly Constitution) went into effect in 2011. Responses were swift, the move was heavily criticized by the Council of Europe, the European Union and the United States mostly because of concerns regarding the centralization of the legislative and executive power, the weakening of the constitutional court and the judiciary, the curbing of civil liberties, the restrictions on freedom of speech, and the lack of transparency and lack of public debate during the drafting of the new constitution (Uitz 2015: 288–290).

In one of his most recent scandalous outbursts, Viktor Orbán said that the European Union should be prepared for a looming “invasion of Muslim migration,” which he described as the Trojan horse of terrorism, cheap labor and a great business for liberal NGOs. He went on taking Hungary as a prime example and explained the benefits of building up

walls to defend the EU’s borders. In his words: “We defend thousands of kilometers of the European border without any contribution from the EU. We are the living proof that defense is possible.”¹⁵

The Hungarian prime minister has also warned that the EU must change its major policies in order to safeguard competitiveness, family values and Christianity, because, as he says, European socialists “want to let in millions of migrants, remove subsidiary and increase taxes.” In September 2017, in a speech given at the Association of Christian Intellectuals (KÉSZ), Orbán simply announced: “We have to fight the plan of George Soros to become a country of migrants and make our nation into a mixed culture.”¹⁶ Ironically, firm Eurosceptic that he is, the prime minister urged British citizens to vote against the referendum in 2016.¹⁷ However, such “strongman” talk is a definite sign of growing concern over refugees and outsiders with a sweeping appeal to nationalistic sentiments. The major migrant wave passing through Hungary in 2015, and the continual governmental anti-migrant propaganda since then, have had an impact on citizens’ world-views. An elderly former machinist in the Csepel Non-Ferrous Metal Works I interviewed in Budapest recently agreed: “Orbán speaks our language, and he shows that he cares about our lives, families and security.”¹⁸ Residents in the countryside added their well-known support for the government and continual suspicion and rejection of liberal politicians’ views. A father of four and a respected pig breeder expressed his firm belief: “Look, when they speak, it’s just empty talk that we cannot really understand. One of them supported legalizing marijuana. Crazy. Anyway, in the past 4–5 years I haven’t seen any opposition party politicians campaigning in our town. They only appear on television. They are not real.”

About the threat of foreigners and migrants to Hungarian culture I asked residents in my town about national history and various settlers arriving throughout the centuries. Most agreed that Hungary has long been a welcoming country, and that many historic populations easily assimilated into majority society. A teacher in Csepel formulated her idea as follows: “there is not a nation on this wide earth that

is composed of so many populations as the Hungarian.”¹⁹ Such historical examples aside, citizens are inundated with political slogans loaded with the threat of migrants and foreigners flooding Hungary. For these citizens, migrants pose public security and terror risks, and they firmly believe that migration should be stopped and African countries should be offered technological and monetary assistance to deal with economic crises at home. Furthermore, small countries, like Hungary or Slovakia, should not be forced by the EU to accept a single migrant, they say.²⁰ As a consequence, Hungary’s leader literally opened Pandora’s box: Slovakia, Poland, and Hungary categorically rejected 1,294 refugees allotted to them through the EU resettlement scheme in 2017.²¹ In a 2018 speech at Tusványos (Băile Tușnad in Romania), Orbán firmly stated that migrants are threatening the “construction of the Hungarian nation” and the “building of a new era.”²² Is this only just empty talk? According to governmental sources, by the end of 2017, altogether one million new Hungarian citizenship requests have been approved in Budapest.²³ Most of the applicants were ethnic Hungarians from neighboring states, especially Romania. These numbers are real and fly in the face of some critics of populism who argue that populists’ representation of the people are of “moral and symbolic – not an empirical – nature, it cannot be disproven” (Müller 2016: 39). Thus, Orbán’s vision of a sovereign Hungarian Carpathian Basin, built on traditional Christian and family values, clearly has an element of truth, although the vision is a strictly ethno-national Hungarian state.

As can be seen, populist rhetoric in Hungary as elsewhere has one fundamental structural component: a promise about the creation of a successful and purely Hungarian state with the elimination of enemies, both foreign and internal. The strong anti-migrant rhetoric sustains feelings of insecurity and fear among average citizens, a reason why foreigners such as the Albanian bakers mentioned earlier, or the migrants at the border fences that were erected immediately after the influx of migrants in 2015, have increasingly been identified as the outside enemies. Desperate concerns about the continual tides

of refugees and economic migrants – their employment draining social services, and creating a general mayhem across Hungary – are tropes not only in Hungary but elsewhere in other European states. This is connected to the fundamentalist religious ideology that Christianity and its core values are under attack by Islamic intruders, as most refugees from Africa, the Middle East or Asia confess to that faith. But not only that: all individuals and institutions, including those European states welcoming migrants, present major dangers to the ideals of the Christian nation-state.

By relying on such religious fundamentalism, illiberal ideology is even more of a ready-made digestible concoction for public consumption and not only within the borders of Hungary but without as well. Active and willing cooperation on the part of both the Roman Catholic and Protestant high clergy is clearly visible by the number of clergymen in Orbán’s cabinets. Two of his closest associates, Zoltán Balogh and Zsolt Semjén, both fulfill various ministerial functions and are theologians; the former actually is a practicing Protestant preacher.²⁴ In Roman Catholic hierarchy, most of the bishops and their leader, Cardinal Péter Erdő, are faithful followers of Orbán. With such high-level support, lesser clergy do not dare to voice diverging opinions. I was able to observe how chaplains in smaller towns regularly utter lines emanating from official governmental communiqués or circulars from bishoprics. One such occurrence took place in March 2018, during parliamentary elections, when a priest in the town where I reside openly declared that “true believers can only vote for the ruling Christian party,” brazenly adding, “only this party is able to save Hungary from massive influx of migrants who threaten our churches and religion.”²⁵

A long-time confidant of the prime minister is László Tőkés who is a current member of the European Parliament. Tőkés is a former Transylvanian Protestant bishop whom Orbán has referred to as a person who serves as a “compass” (*iránytű*), someone who shows the right way for the prime minister to proceed with his policies. An ardent supporter of nationalistic ideology, Tőkés has in the past decades

spoken as a defender of Hungarian minority rights in Transylvania, Romania, excessively relying on ethnic compatriots in neighboring states. As my earlier fieldwork material from the early 2000s on Romania reveals, Hungarians in neighboring states are being singled-out as not only carriers of the most important national traditions and tangible Hungarian heritage but as standing at the center of *raison d'être* of illiberal state ideology (Kürti 2001). In a 2018 speech at Tusnádfürdő (Băile Tușnad, Romania), where every summer a national congress has taken place, Tőkés declared that what emanates from Romania and Brussels today is a “multi-layered anti-Hungarianism.”²⁶ Juxtaposing the threat of migration with minority rights abuses in Romania, both Tőkés and Orbán agree that these two major obstacles provide a reason to fight for the creation of a New Era built on the creation of a strong Hungarian nation. Anti-Romanianism and anti-EU stands have been constant in the speeches of the two statesmen; Orbán has even added once that, “the land of the Szeklers will still be Szeklerland when the entire Europe surrenders to Islam.”²⁷ One lady in my town, a well-to-do entrepreneur owning a jewelry shop, says this much: “I, as a Hungarian woman and a mother of two daughters, have the right to worry about migrants. What do you see on television? Murders, rape and robbery all over Europe. What future awaits my daughters if all this comes to Hungary?”²⁸

It is commonly alleged that constitutional changes introduced by Orbán's government, thanks to the two thirds majority it enjoys in parliament, have threatened the independence and impartiality of the judiciary and the media. There has been interference in the activities of foreign-based NGOs. Contrary to its former liberal support for market economy, Orbán has not hesitated to implement policies to intervene in the economy, especially to re-nationalize private enterprises in the name of public interest. His government has introduced sweeping educational reforms to ensure that a standardized version of national history is taught in all schools. Moreover, it opened the way for public schools to return to full ecclesiastical control. Religious and vocational education is one of fundamental aspects of the new

educational curriculum, teaching proper (national) history another. Public nostalgia for the days of imperial glory confines individuals' nostalgia for socialism to the private sphere. In the realm of symbols and “memory culture,” the government has promoted not only the Habsburg era when Budapest shared imperial power with Vienna, but also legends and myths, and especially the inter-war period, generally considered internationally to be an era of authoritarian conservative government marked by *ressentiments* following the loss of empire.

Another strategical element of illiberalism is the central position that scapegoats are accorded in identifying the country's obvious difficulties and backwardness compared to its Western counterparts. Three groups have been scapegoated: the Roma, by far the country's largest minority group, the small but vocal Jewish community, and finally foreigners, especially migrants. Elites of the first two have, to a certain degree, been tamed by governmental programs and elevated statuses. A few token Roma individuals are paraded by the government and placed in special positions. Similarly, the United Hungarian Jewish Congregation (EMIH), and its leader rabbi Slomo Köves, are allied with Viktor Orbán. The influx of foreign migrants, however, is seen as a mounting threat that needs major efforts on the part of the government. For the illiberal state, the number one culprit in assisting migration is George Soros, the Hungarian-born billionaire and philanthropist, who, as it is claimed, single-handedly manages to influence and control EU policies allowing refugees from the developing countries to enter Europe. Soros is *persona non grata* in Hungary for assisting NGOs in their attempt to support migrants on their way to the West or, even more frighteningly, to Hungarian naturalization and citizenship. To fight George Soros, and to eliminate his liberal values from Hungary, the government has attacked the American Central European University (CEU) in Budapest, a school accredited originally in New York State and founded in 1991 by the billionaire. The government amendment, for example, required CEU to open a campus in the state of New York which CEU complied as requested. Another organization set up by

George Soros, the Open Society Foundation, decided to leave Budapest by moving its offices to Berlin in August 2018. Facing such attack, CEU leadership decided to set up a campus in Vienna instead of remaining wholly in Budapest; students are now recruited for its new Austrian programs.

Thus both Soros and the EU are identified as enemies of the Hungarian state and the Hungarian “people.” Attacking the EU is rather paradoxical for it is Hungary’s main trading partner and as an EU member state the country reaps the benefit of major EU subsidies. By all accounts, without the flow of monies from Brussels, most things would be a great deal worse, yet the government consistently attacks both over-regulation and the liberal values of the EU. What is clear is that by the second decade of the twenty-first century, Brussels has replaced Moscow as the convenient locus for national grievances.

Through the government’s influence over the popular media, especially television and newspapers, official sentiments saturate the life-worlds of the citizens. Some anthropologists and political scientists use the term political culture to sum up the tacit understandings, symbols and rituals that often seem more significant than interests and rational arguments in mobilizing citizens (Vincent 2002). To be sure, the Hungarian state’s political culture not only relies heavily on the media, it owns and controls most of the media (Minkenberg 2017: 135–137). In fact, state capture has been fully completed in this area (Kerpel 2017: 71–73).²⁹ All this came as no surprise since the legitimacy of extreme right has received a boost with the election of Donald Trump and the process of Brexit, as both Viktor Orbán and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan were re-elected in 2018 with a surprising majority vote in Hungary and Turkey respectively (Erdoğan received 52 percent, his Hungarian counterpart 48 percent of popular votes). As a result, both states are today true one-man regimes. Astonishing as it is, congratulations for Viktor Orbán on his election victory swiftly arrived from none other than Boris Johnson, then British foreign secretary and leader of the pro-Brexit movement in the United Kingdom, tweeting: “Congratulations to Fidesz and

Viktor Orbán on winning the elections in Hungary... (as) we look forward to working with our Hungarian friends to further develop our close partnership.”³⁰ Several British politicians and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) criticized and condemned Johnson’s congratulations as inappropriate and embarrassing. Yet, as it was at that time, Viktor Orbán’s relationship to Brexit politicians was positive and overwhelmingly optimistic. This has not only to do with general ideological fraternity between the UK and Hungarian governments, but concerns the situation of a hundred thousand Hungarian guest workers in Britain. Emigration from Hungary, especially young people leaving for jobs in the UK, has been regarded an embarrassment to the Hungarian government since the early 2000s. Therefore, it is of utmost importance for Viktor Orbán to maintain good relations with London to avoid the possibility of mass repatriation of disgruntled citizens whose votes might force him out of office.

With the unsteady relationship between Hungary and European states, oscillating between harsh German and French condemnation to amicable back-patting on the part of the Visegrád leaders, Orbán’s policy has embraced a novel Eastern approach. Orbán’s ideal states to be followed are full-blown autocratic states or semi-dictatorships, such as Russia, China, and Turkey. Obviously, for Orbán, in such states there is no place for liberal values and democratic norms as institutions of pluralism are hollowed out with a cemented, long-term rule of his party. In order to achieve his goal extreme measures were implemented: the constitutional court was overhauled so that Fidesz appointees became a majority, and its jurisdiction considerably narrowed. The government eliminated the independent fiscal council, responsible for overseeing budgetary policy, and then replaced it with a new council under Fidesz control. A new election law gerrymandered legislative districts that were favorable to Fidesz supporters. In a major policy overhaul, voting rights were extended to ethnic Hungarians in neighboring countries by offering conservative and religious patriots an extra step to join the Hungarian nation.

The government created a new press authority whose chair and members were government loyalists. As a matter of high priority, Orbán has secured a complete domination over the arts and the educational system, just like Erdoğan in Turkey. In both countries, left-wing or oppositional intellectuals are now fearing their jobs and prefer not to enter political debates. Similarly, the judiciary has experienced a full-scale attack; the goal is to remove its role as a check on their power. Thus, the Orbánist creation of a strong party-state entails minimal or no checks and balances, fragmented trade unions and opposition unable to mount formidable anti-governmental countervailing force. Observing the rise of a new illiberal Hungarian state, the EU has voiced its serious concerns, especially the overarching state control over the media and managed corruption with lack of transparency regarding actions by the executive branch. In September 2018, the European Parliament passed a motion for the first time to initiate a so-called Article 7 process declaring that Hungary is at risk of “breaching the EU’s core values.”³¹

Predictably but not unexpectedly, in light of what has been written above, a re-militarization of society has also emerged. During state socialism, young men reaching 18 years of age were required to serve compulsory two-year military service. Being a member of the Warsaw Pact, Hungary’s alliance with the Soviet Union bought Soviet military hardware, technology and skills. Dismembered in 1991, the Warsaw Pact gave way to a new system of militarization, when mandatory conscription was abandoned in favor of a professional army as Hungary became a member of NATO in 1999. Since 2010, however, a Counter Terrorism Center (shortened as TEK in Hungarian) was created, a special police force under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, to combat illegal drug-trafficking, organized crime and terrorism. Two years later, the government issued a Hungarian Security Strategy (NBS) in which “[t]he Hungarian government does not view any state as its enemy.”³² Yet, in this new international geopolitics some “foreign” populations are viewed as rather undesirable by the state.

Dislike for Civil Society Organizations

In Hungarian popular parlance, the idea of internal enemies is not of recent vintage. Nationalist thinking is inundated with enemy images, select groups identified as enemies of the nation, the state and the “people”; during Stalinism the bourgeoisie, well-to-do peasants, intellectuals, and the clergy were labeled as such (Kürti 2013: 78–81). Illiberal states also identify groups as undesirable, working as foreign agents or whose rights should be curtailed. Putin’s Russia and Orbán’s Hungary are prime examples of the way in which they have singled out critical intellectuals as adversaries. In June 2018, the Hungarian parliament voted in favor to criminalize those civil organizations that are assisting migrants and support asylum-seekers.³³ Yet, it is clear that one of the most fundamental issues in Hungarian governmental communication has been that civil organizations should not fulfill humanitarian functions, including assisting refugees and migrants, as churches and governmental agencies fulfill that purpose completely. In any case, illiberal elites are well-aware of social issues and problems for they have been “listening to people” by launching several so-called national consultations since 2005 (Gerő & Kopper 2013: 371). National consultation, actually mass mailing to households with substantial state funding, is a euphemism for a one-sided questionnaire homogenizing voters for governmental support.

Such a complete overhaul of the political establishment, as noted by many, amounts to the full-fledged capture of the state (Fazekas & Tóth 2016: 320; Innes 2014: 101). While political scientists use state capture to refer to this top-down process, rarely do they provide affirmation whether citizens actually recognize these at all. Yet, the rearrangements over the entire state apparatuses, from national institutions to municipal governments, have been noted by citizens of all walks of life. A well-to-do farmer argues that, “Well, the communists also grabbed everything, why shouldn’t they [the ruling party MPs] enjoy the benefit of their work.” A woman entrepreneur specializing in jewelry and bijou had this to say: “I have never seen such a feverish buying of gold jewelry in

the past as today. Obviously, people here have money, which is good. But they only have money because we have a booming economy and foreign trade. I don't really care if our politicians get rich and put their own people in powerful positions, what I care about is that things are moving ahead" (in Hungarian she used the expression *pörögnek a dolgok* which is a colloquial expression indicating momentous economic and trading activities).³⁴

Populism and Anthropology

Populism – being an elastic concept as it is – has been a truly transnational phenomenon. It occurs all over the world, north (US, UK, France, Scandinavia), south (Italy, Turkey, Latin America), in Russia and even the Far East (the Philippines). This does not mean that populism entails the same features, symbols and policies. It is a truly cultural phenomenon with many distinct national features. This “distinctiveness” includes even entirely opposing features, which is at the heart of anthropology. This idea is well known, as Leo Tolstoy wrote in his book *Anna Karenina* that: “All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.” Illiberal populism, like anthropology, uses “culture,” “tradition,” and the “people” as core, actually primordial, concepts. This is especially important in light of the economic argument for the root cause of populism.

An anthropological approach to populism should contextualize the multidimensions of populism. People are not directly threatened by money, oil or foreign goods but by a fear of forces they cannot control, forces generated by other people, in such threats as fictionalized diseases, or monstrous races. African and Asian immigrants, especially Muslims, and with them the assertingly interrelated rising crime rates and the increasingly scarce resources, are standard labels used by populists to influence the general public. As many populist politicians argue these days, migrants and refugees are deemed untrustworthy for they are not only seen as a “terrorist threat,” but are also treated as transmitters of diseases, smell, and feared for imposing their own way of life on the host society. Anti-immigrant rhetoric describes them as trouble-makers who challenge

conceptions of nationhood by threatening borders (real or imagined), and turning local lives upside-down. According to police reports, before the mass exodus of migrants, that is 2013–2015, foreigners who committed crimes in Hungary were citizens of Romania, Serbia, and Ukraine, and not Middle Eastern and Muslim migrants as governmental propaganda would have it (Vajkai 2017: 43).

More than that, populist illiberalism in its many guises is a good subject to study and although dynamic and sometimes chaotic it is also systemic (at least in Hungary, Russia, Turkey and Poland). It has both a structure and a momentum in its conversion of traditional religious ethic into political religion. At the moment, as the Hungarian case points to, populism seems to be heading toward a genuine social engineering ideology. Just like the nineteenth-century American utopian communes, populists of post-socialist kind seek to build heaven on earth by transforming the existing state into a new one (democracy into an illiberal one).

At times, populism relies on peoples' subjective perspectives of who they are, how they live, their status in the community, and especially what their aspirations and hopes are for themselves and their children. “I'm a Hungarian [*Magyar vagyok*],” uttered a worker in Csepel when I asked him about the origin of his family. “I know my ancestor came to Hungary from Germany, but that was more than 150 years ago.”³⁵ Identities and loyalties, as George Orwell noted after World War II, shift and peoples are most often than not indifferent to realities.³⁶ A populist demagoguery promises to fulfill aspirations and hopes citizens have by pointing to those processes that counter forces that attack the nation, whether EU-liberalist policies or other foreign interest. This is the reason why criticism of liberalism is often an open trope of anti-Semitism. The illiberal state's symbolic return to the inter-war period by admitting the positive role Admiral Miklós Horthy played at that time in leading the country to become an ally of Nazi Germany, has continually dampened relations between the Orbán government and Jewish leaders. Two particular issues should be highlighted: the House of Fates (*Sorsok Háza*) in 2015

and the Memorial of German Occupation (*Német Megszállás Emlékműve*) in 2014. The former, a giant museum, has been condemned by the Association of Hungarian Jewish Congregations (MAZSIHISZ) for its management and content, a reason why it is still closed to the public.³⁷ The memorial monument in downtown Budapest has been at the center of furious controversy by civil and Jewish organizations, a reason why it was erected at night without an official opening ceremony (Arató 2014).

One of the most distinguishing features of Hungarian illiberalism is the fear of obliteration, the fear of dying out. Already after World War II, the philosopher István Bibó wrote about “the existential fear for the survival of the national community” that has preoccupied the minds of the elites since the defeat of the 1848–49 War of Independence and, especially, after the close of World War I, when the Treaty of Versailles created rump Hungary awarding Romania, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union (Bibó 1982: 255).³⁸ Clearly, such tragedies have been preserved in collective memories, mostly in literature and the arts, and nativist nationalism continually dwells on threats posed by outsiders. In numerous speeches and writings by politicians, and especially the Christian clergy, the alarming trope of decreasing Hungarian Christian population is identified as a number one concern. They parade as defenders of the ideal Christian family, the primacy of the male bread-winner and suppressing abortion. In this issue, for example, the religious and the national are somewhat at loggerheads; the current government actually favors assisted reproduction as one possibility to increase fertility. As this demonstrates, populist policy can often be controversial concerning gender roles and gender identities.

Populism also feeds on the regional and local disparities that resulted in miscalculated planning and uneven development. The main culprits are obviously the previous regimes and international organizations. Anyone traveling in Hungary can point to visible signs for the country’s ills. Therefore populist politicians often find support in rural communities, especially those hard hit by factory closings, or with unviable family farms created after the collapse of

state cooperatives. I heard at a local farm how politicians demonize global market forces and global institutions (European Central Bank, International Monetary Fund) by claiming to defend local jobs, produce and family agricultural establishments. Even if locals themselves have not experienced the loss of their jobs, they often point to the next town where such closings resulted in massive unemployment, and welfare and credit failures. There is of course a major difference: while agrarian communities tend to support right-wing populism, urban, working-class communities and intellectuals tend to support left-wing or green populists.

What is at the heart of Orbánism is that leaders tend to think of themselves as strong statesmen who can fix any problems from migration to economy, from education to the arts. They utter their firm beliefs that they are creating a new world and the primary role of the state is to enforce law and order; they fear chaos more than anything else, and instinctively respond to problems by “cracking down” on the perceived source of the issue. Orbánist authoritarians disdain democracy even if they maintain some of its trappings. Finally, Orbánist populist leaders tend to think about their ideology as a holistic one. In order to create an illiberal state, leaders attempt to order and supervise not only the political, but equally strongly, the local and the international, the economic and the cultural life of their subjects.

Conclusion: Illiberalism Matters

To conclude, one important question demands answer: how can we explain the *Zeitgeist* in Hungary, the development and state of illiberal democracy which seems to erode the foundations of democratic values? It is a deep question and it has no simple answer. Since the EU expansion toward the East, the far-right has gained important momentum in national and EU elections. Interviews with urban and rural dwellers, one importance lesson offers itself: the durability of Hungarian illiberalism stands on several grounds not the least of which is that right-wing ideology has revealed a constant and growing trajectory since the collapse of communism in 1989. The Right has also recently received a boost from

two major international processes, Brexit and the presidency of Donald Trump, and their lesser European counterparts in Austria, Poland, and Turkey. Furthermore, support from Russia's Vladimir Putin cannot be disregarded as unimportant. Relying on Russian oil and gas, state loans and the building of the second Hungarian nuclear plant, Moscow is – once again – a major player in Hungarian foreign and internal policy matters. In addition, the professionalization of various institutions and organizations (Művészeti Akadémia, Civil Összefogás Forum, Keresztény Értelmiségiek Szövetsége, etc.) and the capture of the media have also provided more outlets for governmental ideology and offered jobs and salaries to willing and faithful literary and cultural elites. But before anything else, and this is what I have provided several examples above, the first decades of the twenty-first century, especially the period following the EU enlargement, have resulted in a conservative right-wing political culture in Europe that supplies both ideology as well as the subjects for illiberal democracy. As my fieldwork in Hungary indicates, a concomitant religious fundamentalism has been cemented. Today, an overarching Christian value system provides justification for governmental policies and laws, ranging from family subsidies, staggering funding for Roman Catholic and Protestant schools and churches, intolerance for migrants and homophobia and even reliance on historic symbols of the monarchy (Kürti 2015a).

The main objective of this seemingly increasing attraction of illiberalism as I have described above is to concentrate power as much as possible within the parameters of Christian fundamentalist and nationalist neopopulism. True, populist illiberalism is not a novel feature in politics, its neocon ideology built, as it has, on hatred and dissatisfaction with the ruling EU establishment, has been a new departure. Illiberal populists are convincing a growing number of voters that isolationism and strongman-leadership are the only alternative to protect them against the perceived threats of globalization (actually EU liberalization) by returning their countries to an imagined greatness of the past. They incite hatred against both their own minorities, especially the

racialized *Cigányok* (Gypsies-Romany) and Jews, as well as political and economic migrants from Africa, Asia and the Middle East. By championing new international geopolitics often in contrast to EU steps, governing elites seek to circumvent democratic processes by eliminating opposition, curtailing rights of intellectuals and civil society. A precondition for the emergence of illiberal regime has been the fundamental weakness in democratic institutions beyond the political sphere, including the media, civil society, anti-corruption agencies, and the judiciary, as in many post-communist states these checks and balances remain extremely fragile.

To put it bluntly, an illiberal democracy is an oxymoron. After all, democracy, in its original Greek city-state, meant “rule of the people,” a notion retained in universal suffrage and civic participation in public affairs including free speech. Relying on this notion, liberalism generally is a political and moral philosophy supporting principles of constitutionalism based on individual freedom, civil rights, representative democracy, free market, secularism, and independent judiciary and media. Surely, the governing Hungarian elites are not interested in maintaining, let alone creating, any kind of democracy that is the democratic rule of the people. Giving voice to the people, or in earlier Fidesz discourse, to the “civic-minded citizen,” is possible only through the accepted framework within the centralized Fidesz party system hailing slogans about Christian democracy (*keresztény demokrácia*). This amounts to the making of a new centralized state: a Hungarian nation-state without trappings of liberal values (Kis 2019: 46; Pap 2017: 59). In Orbán's own words, “liberalism is nothing to do with democracy, on the contrary, liberalism is non-democracy.”³⁹ Differing from the diverse populisms of the right in Europe, after 1989 in Hungary the Hungarian Justice and Life Party of the 1990s and its later alter ego The Right of the early 2000s, were prime examples of the extremists' movement. Today's populist politics in Hungary is different from both its early antecedents as well as its UK, US and other European versions in one fundamental aspect: it is a full-blown state ideology in the creation of the illiberal state.

Thus my version of anthropology at home has at its core similar questions that concerned politicians, intellectuals as well as ordinary citizens are rightly asking: is there a way out of the entanglement in the wake of Brexit, the enormous popularity of right-wing parties all over Europe and the emergence of illiberal states such as the one in the making in Hungary? As some interviewees point out, populists and their advocates may be right when they hark at liberals for not knowing answers to burning social problems, such as lagging economic development, mass migration and social inequalities. For instance, allowing Albanians to conduct business in Hungary, similarly to Russians, Chinese and Israelis who are at present carving out space for themselves in Budapest's thriving real-estate business, has often been mentioned by workers, civil servants and intellectuals alike as the result of a mismanaged governmental policies since the early 2000s. No doubt, European states, both liberal and illiberal, face major challenges; among them the most burning is: how to manage effectively European integration, cultural pluralism and consequences of mass exodus by solving the crises created by the uneven distribution of wealth and resources. The outbreak of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic in the beginning of 2020, has highlighted even more the necessity of global cooperation but, equally important, that these issues need swift, radical and systemic responses and solutions (Cohen & Kupferschmidt 2020: 963).⁴⁰ Similarly, we as anthropologists and citizens of increasingly polarized regions of the world face a congruent serious dilemma: not only to describe and interpret multiple identities and cultural synchronicities but – equally decisive – how to assist in their maintenance and survival not in some sort of half-hearted multiculturalism that has gained a solid foothold in the public sphere in the past decades. Rather, in a meaningful way where a truly multidemocratic and pluralistic cultural and political representation is possible for all. For this, we may rely on an African proverb, though some say it was uttered by Winston S. Churchill, that “when there is no enemy within, the enemies outside cannot hurt you.”⁴¹

Notes

- 1 For a detailed description of earlier fieldwork and analyses describing these communities in English, see Kürti (2002, 2015b, 2018), and Hann & Kürti (2015). Interviews with informants were conducted in Csepel (Budapest) and Lajosmizse and two neighboring settlements (Ladánybene, Kerekegyháza) in early 2010s, with follow-up interviews in 2018 and 2019.
- 2 For a classic treatment of anthropology at home, see Jackson (1987); for a criticism of the concept, see Mughal (2015).
- 3 As one informant expressed: “Like the flood, they just came, nobody wanted them, nobody invited them” (*Elárasztottak mintket, mint az özönvíz, senki sem várta, senki sem hívta őket*). Interview, ZAB, in Kerekegyháza, August 2015. The Biblical flood as a metaphor to refer to migration was a constant trope in right-wing media.
- 4 For anthropological analyses on migrants in Hungary in English, see Kallius (2017) and Thorleifsson (2017). “Albanian” in this context is an ethnonym referring to migrants from Kosovo.
- 5 The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein has openly called the Hungarian prime minister “racist”. See <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22765&LangID=E> (accessed April 29, 2020).
- 6 For Orbán's speeches, see his own books (*A történelem főutcáján*, 2002, *Egy az ország*, 2007, *Rengéshullámok*, 2010); his biographies in English are written by Igor Janke (*Forward*, 2015), and Paul Lendvai (*Orbán – Europe's New Strongman*, 2017).
- 7 A Hungarian summary of illiberal democracy is Juhász, László & Zgut (2016); for English, with anthropological insights, see Hann (2016) and Kallius, Rajaram & Monterescu (2016). On the rise of the new right and neo-nationalism in Europe, see Gingrich & Banks (2006).
- 8 Here I have used Orbán's collected speeches at: <http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/category/beszdek/> (last accessed April 28, 2020). Some are translated into English at The Orange Files, <https://theorangefiles.hu/prime-minister-viktor-orban/> (accessed April 20, 2020).
- 9 Referred to in Hungarian as *rezsicsökkentés* (utility expense cuts), the 2013 Law of LIV went into effect May 10, 2013.
- 10 Opposition politicians have harangued about the actual savings due to the policy bill, arguing that on the international market oil, gasoline and natural gas dropped much more significantly, which would have allowed the government a much larger reduction for households. See e.g., Imre Tevan, “Rezsicsökkentés és államosítás,” *Népszava*, January 27, 2014, https://nepszava.hu/1009034_rezsicsokkent-es-allamositas (accessed April 29, 2020).

- 11 The actual cultural policies and their results are discussed by Kristóf (2017). The Hungarian expression “bibsi” is short for “biboldo,” originally a Rom word for the unchristened child, but generally used as a slur for Jews.
- 12 The informant referred to the 2010 law of unified state-funded public works programs initiated by the government in 2011. On the successes and failures of the system, see Blaskó & Fazekas (2016), and Koós (2016).
- 13 Interview, BI, in Csepel, June 2019.
- 14 A note: *Orbanism* is not the same as *Orbanism*, as the latter refers to a Berlin-based media and publishing company (its name is compounded of “orbis” and “urbanism”). The former is the name of the Hungarian prime minister, Viktor Orbán, with the necessary diacritic on the letter “a.”
- 15 Viktor Orbán’s interview in *Bild*, the German weekly, “Ihr wolltet die Migranten, wir nicht!,” June 1, 2019, <https://www.bild.de/politik/ausland/viktor-orban/orban-interview-54403736.bild.html> (accessed April 22, 2020).
- 16 For Viktor Orbán’s speech, see “Orbán Viktor előadása a Keresztény Értelmiségiek Szövetségének kongresszusán,” published in *Magyar Kurír*, September 19, 2017 (accessed April 22, 2020).
- 17 The Hungarian government’s advertisement appeared in London in June 2016 as follows: “The decision is yours, but I would like you to know that Hungary is proud to stand with you as a member of the European Union.”
- 18 Interview, AZ, in Csepel district of Budapest, June 2019.
- 19 “A magyar az egy olyan kevert nép, hogy még egy ilyen nincs az egész föld kerékén.”
- 20 Hungary and the V4 countries offered 1.9 million euros to assist Kenyan cashew nut farmers, see “African development project to create local jobs,” June 18, 2018, <http://www.kormany.hu/hu/foldmuvelesugyi-miniszterium/videkfejlesztesert-felelos-allamtitkarsag/hirek/afrikai-fejlesztési-projekt-a-helyi-munkahelyteremtésért> (accessed April 20, 2020).
- 21 “EU to sue Poland, Hungary and Czechs for refusing refugee quotas,” December 7, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-42270239> (accessed April 19, 2020).
- 22 See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sY1NgLb2Ggw> (accessed April 19, 2020).
- 23 Zsolt Semjén, “Megvan az egymilliomodik új állampolgár” [We have one million new Hungarian citizens], November 9, 2017, <http://www.kormany.hu/hu/a-miniszterelnok-helyettes/hirek/folytatodnak-amegkezdett-programok-megvan-az-egymilliomodik-uj-allampolgar> (accessed April 19, 2020). Between 2011 and 2015, 95 percent of naturalized ethnic Hungarians have arrived from Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and the Ukraine (KSH 2017).
- 24 There are several more Protestant theologians and ministers in the Fidesz-KDNP party as members of parliament: Richárd Hörcsik, Péter Hoppál, László Szászfalvi, Zoltán Demeter. See http://www.parlament.hu/aktiv-kepviseloi-nevsor?p_auth=pQnAxV0j&p_p_id=pairproxy_WAR_pairproxyportlet_INSTANCE_9xd2Wc9jP4z8&p_p_lifecycle=1&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-1&p_p_col_count=1&pairproxy_WAR_pairproxyportlet_INSTANCE_9xd2Wc9jP4z8_pai_rAction=%2Finternet%2Ffcplsqli%2Fogy_kpv.kepv_adat%3Fp_azon%3Dd026%26p_stilus%3D%26p_head%3D (accessed April 21, 2020).
- 25 For the transformation of local political culture, see Hann & Kürti (2015). In contrast, I observed this in my fieldwork in the 21st district of Budapest, a predominantly working-class town known in the twentieth century for its social democratic tradition (Kürti 2018).
- 26 László Tóké’s speech is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sY1NgLb2Ggw> (accessed April 22, 2020).
- 27 See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sY1NgLb2Ggw> (accessed April 19, 2020). For the Szekler region of Transylvania, its history and symbolic place in the Hungarian national imaginary, see my earlier study, especially chapters 4–5 (Kürti 2001).
- 28 Interview, IR, local entrepreneur, Lajosmizse, July, 2016.
- 29 The World Bank invented state capture in 2000 to refer to powerful individuals, firms and corrupt groups influencing bureaucracy, the judiciary or military to promote and protect private interests (Innes 2014).
- 30 Quoted in *The Guardian*, April 8, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/apr/09/boris-johnson-slated-for-congratulating-viktor-orban-after-election-win> (accessed April 20, 2020).
- 31 Parliament denounces Hungary’s illiberalism, <https://www.politico.eu/article/european-parliament-approves-hungary-censure-motion/> (accessed April 21, 2020).
- 32 NBS, *Magyar Közlöny*, 2012. évi 19. szám, p. 1379, http://2010-2014.kormany.hu/download/f/49/70000/1035_2012_korm_határozat.pdf (accessed April 21, 2020).
- 33 The bill was passed by the parliament with an overwhelming majority. A separate bill amending the basic law/constitution (7th amendment) bans the resettlement of foreign populations in Hungary. The seventh amendments of Hungary’s Constitution, Magyarország Alaptörvényének hetedik módosítása. *Magyar Közlöny*, 2018. június 18., 97. Szám, <http://www.kozlonyok.hu/nkonline/MKPDF/hiteles/MK18097.pdf> (accessed April 19, 2020).

- 34 Interviews with SK, a farmer, and IR, a local entrepreneur, Lajosmizse, July, 2016.
- 35 Earlier I argued that the workforce at Csepel, as in other industrial company towns of Greater Budapest, was composed of a mixture of immigrant laborers and peasants (Kürti 2002, especially chapters 2 and 3).
- 36 See, George Orwell, *Notes on Nationalism*, May 1945, http://www.orwell.ru/library/essays/nationalism/english/e_nat (accessed April 19, 2020).
- 37 The museum is located at the Józsefváros railroad station in Budapest where Jewish citizens were transported to the death camps in 1944.
- 38 Bibó's collected works can be read digitally (Bibó 1990).
- 39 In the same Tusnádfürdő speech on July 28, 2018.
- 40 True to its illiberal ideology, the right-wing majority of the Hungarian parliament passed new coronavirus measures on 30 March 2020 allowing the nationalist prime minister, Viktor Orbán, to rule by decree. See "2020 évi XII. törvény a koronavírus elleni védekezésről," *Magyar Közlöny*, 2020. évi 58. szám, 1634–1636, <https://magyarkozlony.hu/dokumentumok/a96e25d459b04cd-d5d900c75fa4dbe0c1492f682/megtekintes> (accessed April 29, 2020).
- 41 There are plenty of internet sources citing this saying belonging to Winston Churchill. I have not, however, been able to find such utterance of the British statesman. According to the *The Routledge Book of World Proverbs* it is an African proverb (Stone 2006: 127).

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