Mobilizing Meanings

Translocal Identities of the Far Right Web

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Abstract

Europe has witnessed the rise of a multigenerational, populist shift to the right, characterized by the unapologetic deployment of extremist symbols, ideologies, and politics, but also by repudiations of right-wing labels associated with racism, xenophobia, and nativist entitlements. The political lexicon of far-right rhetoric derives its considerable persuasive force from mobilizing and normalizing extremist views. This article examines the intricately and translocally woven connections among representative movements, organizations, and media personalities who popularize and disseminate far-right views through social media and their own internet websites. With diatribes about the threat against Russia, the uncontainable and intolerable influx of refugees and asylum seekers, whom they blame for terrorist attacks, deteriorating family values, the loss of national German identity, and the antidemocratic politics of Chancellor Angela Merkel, the cadre of self-credentializing experts and politicians, some in alignment with Pegida, mobilize historical moments and meanings to make connections with a broad spectrum of supporters.

Keywords

populism, translocality, "gender mainstreaming," the Immortals, Quer-Denken, *Compact*

Introduction

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the publication of Konrad Weiss's seminal essay "Die neue alte Gefahr. Junge Faschisten in der DDR" (The new old danger, young fascists in the German Democratic Republic, 1988/1989), the specter of National Socialism and its appeal to subsequent

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generations of Germans have kept a vice-like grip on the construction of national identity and the German political imaginary.[1] Weiss, a director, citizens' rights activist, and former representative of Alliance 90/The Greens in the Bundestag, opens with an inventory of racist, antisemitic, and xenophobic attacks and their repercussions, perpetrated by young right-wing skinheads and fascists in 1987-1988. With discernment, prescience, and dismay, Weiss forges a link between the past and his present: "One would think this was news from the pogrom year 1938 or something coming from a distant part of the world."[2] In this thoughtful and thought-provoking piece, Weiss maintains the focus on a younger generation, whom he ultimately describes with poignancy as a product of East German society, as "our children."[3] More recently, Europe has witnessed the rise of a multigenerational, populist shift to the right, characterized in some ways by the unapologetic deployment of fascist symbols, ideologies, and politics. Nevertheless, as journalist Anna Sauerbrey observes in a 2015 *New York Times* op-ed, "The New Face of Racism in Germany," the familiar signifiers of right-wing radicalism, shaved heads, combat boots, and tattoos, have morphed into the new normal. The subject of her analysis, Björn Höcke, a representative (*Landessprecher*) for the Eurosceptic, right-wing populist party Alternative for Germany (Alternative für Deutschland, AfD), breaks the stereotypical mold:

> As a young man, he was a member of "Junge Union," the youth organization of Chancellor Angela Merkel's center-right Christian Democrats. He's a high school history teacher on leave and a married father of four. He lives in the countryside and is invariably well dressed, though never in a showy way.
>
> Is this the new face of hate in Germany?[4]

Höcke, who is fluent in hate speech masquerading as true free speech, had delivered blatantly racist remarks on the "'differing reproductive strategies' of Africans and Europeans" in a public address.[5] Even the AfD, with its limited yet significant electoral victories in Brandenburg and Thuringia, requested he resign his membership. While Höcke posted a video about the need to avoid a split in the party–ideological tensions bred dissent among the members–Höcke's shunning and other factors generated a sub-group, "Der Flügel," which defines itself as a "*Sammelbewegung*" and in the service of the AfD. Linked on Höcke's Facebook page, Der Flügel self-identifies as a resistance movement of the people, an alternative to the traditional political parties, and a staunch advocate of national sovereignty as well as German identity. Predictably, Der Flügel opposes the social experiments (*Gesellschaftsexperimente*) supposedly practiced on Germany in recent decades: gender

mainstreaming, multiculturalism, diluted education (*Erziehungsbeliebigkeit*) among them.[6]

From this example, several important points emerge and warrant further analysis. The use of openly racist, fascist-inflected language and symbols does not necessarily mean the end of a political career in the contemporary Federal Republic.[7] The political lexicon of far-right rhetoric derives its considerable and persuasive force from normalizing and mainstreaming extremist views. Most significantly, the instrumentalization of the internet can create and disseminate a digitally enhanced image of the far right that coopts and mobilizes historical meanings, forges ideological connections across geographical boundaries, and reinvigorates a narrative about a threatened national identity inflected with a persecution complex.

The nativist narrative invokes the desire for a premodern nation-state that Tamir Bar-on has elaborated in his work on the French *nouvelle droite* (new right, ND). More importantly for the emergence and momentum of the new right is the pan-European message their adherents would disseminate. The collective support of "Europe for Europeans," which Bar-on attributes to the ND, is evident in comparable German ideologies as well, evidence of a longing "that would restore premodern ethnic consciousness to the continent, banish immigrants and non-Europeans from the body politic, and make Europeans great players in history again."[8] His work profiles the role assumed by intellectuals in the process of achieving political change or exerting influence over centrist parties. In this article, I explore the evolution of the right in the Federal Republic by focusing on a cast of–in some cases–self-appointed intellectuals in the German political context and their common ground with Pegida (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the West), a movement for which they provide ideological infrastructure, as in the AfD's assumption of an anti-Islamic platform. As movements are eclipsed or recede from the public sphere, their message is not erased, but rather recoded and redistributed.

With the upsurge of right-wing populism–and violence–across Western and Eastern Europe, the anxiety Weiss articulated in the late 1980s about the capacity of xenophobia to unite mainstream and extremist ideology has been realized. The far right's identitarian turn, facilitated by social media and digital dissemination, highlights the importance of translocal connectivity while insisting on a motivated and grounded relationship between German identity and entitlement to home turf. In their cogent analysis of translocality as a methodological concept with the potential to overcome the cognitive limitations of national and even transnational models, Clemens Greiner and Patrick Sakdapolrak survey the growing literature about the

term from an interdisciplinary perspective. The concept can encompass discourses, practices, and sociospatial identities more commensurate with migration, (im)mobility, and citizenship—or the lack thereof. Their approach also considers the circulation of knowledge in a globalized and digitized age, as it contributes to and even co-produces identity. They write:

> Sometimes, translocality (or translocalism) is merely used as a synonym for transnationalism. In most cases, however, it is used to build upon and extend insights from this long-established research tradition. As such, the term usually describes phenomena involving mobility, migration, circulation and spatial interconnectedness not necessarily limited to national boundaries.[9]

Translocal approaches to mobility and space disrupt largely Eurocentric ideas about rootedness, "understood as [a] firm relationship between identity and territory,"[10] which does not preclude European actors' accessing the networks of "local-to-local" interconnections in order to recuperate and reassert a proprietary relationship to the nation state.

It is important to examine the intricately and translocally woven connections among representative movements, organizations, and media personalities who, while popularizing new right and Eurosceptic views and disseminating them widely through social media and their own internet websites, repudiate any extremism. With their diatribes about threats against Russia from the West, the purportedly uncontainable and intolerable influx of refugees and asylum seekers, whom they blame for terrorist attacks,[11] deteriorating family values, the loss of national German identity, and the anti-democratic politics of Chancellor Angela Merkel, the cadre of self-credentializing[12] "publicists" and politicians mobilize historical moments and meanings to make connections with a broad spectrum of supporters.

Pegida without Borders

The Federal Republic of Germany, under the leadership of Merkel, has played a central role in attempting to cope with the refugee crisis, exacerbated primarily by wars in Syria, but also in Afghanistan and Iraq. With the influx of nearly one million refugees and asylum seekers—predicted to reach a total of 1.5 million in 2016—the German far right has seized the politically opportune moment of the refugee crisis and concomitant identity crisis that threatens the achievements of the European Union—open borders foremost among them—to centralize and mainstream extremist ideologies. Simmering Islamophobia—not to dismiss the real fear and possibility of terrorists entering Europe along with refugees and asylum seekers—threatens to come to a

boil. The startling emergence of Dresden-based Pegida in late 2014, for example, despite its leadership debacles, has spawned a series of transnational and translocal identitarian and nativist movements that rely on global discourses equating Islam with terrorism while sounding the alarm for local activism to address imminent threats. Even less extreme positions, based on assumptions about religious and cultural incompatibility, remain Islamophobic. The parallel organization of regional and local groups like Bagida (Bavaria), Bärgida (Berlin), Kargida (Karlsruhe), Mügida (Munich), Bragida (Braunschweig), and Legida (Leipzig), among others, indicates not only the appeal of anti-Islamization, the platform of the main group, but it also underscores the importance of "branding" an ideology and both virtual and face-to-face networking. Fueled by the terrorist attacks in Paris (November 2015) and elsewhere, the rising threat of the Islamic State (IS, ISIS, ISIL), and the ongoing refugee "crisis" in Europe, the far right has adopted flexible media strategies to survive, transform, and impact democratic politics and practices in the Federal Republic of Germany and beyond.[13]

As noted above, Weiss makes connections between the fascist past and present at a time when extremism of that complexion existed primarily at the margins of East German society. Today, far-right populism mobilizes a different set of signifiers to achieve an intergenerational and more mainstream appeal by occupying the position of the persecuted. Pegida has appropriated the revolutionary and democratic impulses of East German history through, for example, the organization of Monday demonstrations, familiar from the peaceful marches in Leipzig that escalated and spread, speeding the German Democratic Republic's (GDR) ultimate demise, and the repurposing of the slogan "Wir sind das Volk!" (We are the people), which, in 1989, gave voice to a gutsy insistence on the democratic identity of the ruled, not the rhetorical collective noun evoked by the platitudes of party functionaries. The Pegida graphic shows a stock figure, familiar from anti-litter campaigns, discarding highly recognizable extremist symbols, foremost among them the ISIS flag and the swastika, in a public receptacle. The first-glance acquaintance with the imagery and the rhetoric would encourage the appearance that Pegida transcends the debris of radicalisms. Radicalism from the far right is, however, redefining itself through translocality. It is important to analyze the specific strategies used in "branding" right-wing populism and identitarian movements and their online presence, and also to examine some of the strategies of resistance and protest against these groups.

The intensity of the local lays a solid foundation for the international capacity of the networking strategies and mechanisms of the far right. Nevertheless, it is necessary to address the question of how local groups connect

to transnational affiliates in order to produce new meanings within historical discourses about old threats. With the Federal Republic at the center of Europe's attempt to maintain open borders, accommodate refugees and migrants, and maintain economic stability, the country still remains the only one in the region to have staved off the type of electoral success enjoyed by the far right in neighboring countries–France, Hungary, Poland, the Netherlands, and Belgium, for example. Pegida is not a political party, but the recent rise of the AfD and other groups attest to the flexibility of the right to reinvent a group dynamic with broad appeal that contributes to the survival of extremist politics. To make this point, I look first at the signifiers of identitarian movements; their intersection with explicitly radical social media based groups, such as the short-lived Unsterblichen or Immortals; then at the self-credentializing internet publicists whose rhetoric and web presence aligns the privileged far right with grassroots extremism.

Identitarian Movements and the Immortals

The fluent use of digital media combined with nearly revenant imagery characterizes identitarian movements in Europe. Fabian Virchow's analysis of the identitarian movement in France and its resonance in Germany illuminates the inchoate origins of the new racism:

> The "identity" offered by the IB [*identitäre Bewegung*] sets itself off against classical racist theories that stress the superiority of one race over others, instead emphasizing the "right to diversity." However, this right is identified with a duty to diversify according to the parameters of the claimed "ethno-cultural identity," so that a co-existence of a folk collective delimited by apartheid is being promoted.[14]

In Germany, the *identitäre Bewegung* displays a Facebook page with the banner "Defend Europe" and the symbol used by French "*Le bloc identitaire*" (BI). Among the thirteen cover photos is one of a demonstration with the sign "young people without migration background" (Die Jugend ohne Migrationshintergrund), to counter the bureaucratic designation "with migration background," which refers to migrant and immigrant communities. They thank everyone for the more than 22,000 likes on their page. Similar to the French identitarian movement, they use the Greek letter lambda as their symbol, eschewing the display of more explicitly nationalist icons. The mobilization of such a symbol, which, as Virchow observes, according to legend adorned the shields of Spartan warriors, inserts it into the syntax of "multiculturalism" and "diversity" that identitarian movements purportedly hope to enjoy by asserting their national entitlements.[15]

Here, the ironically short-lived movement, Die Unsterblichen or The Immortals deserves mention. It appeared in the peripheral vision of the global gaze until it was prohibited. The New York *Daily News* took up the media baton from *Die Zeit* and covered the flash mob demonstrations in Bautzen: "A German neo-Nazi group has been harnessing 21st century technology to stage terrifying flash-mob protests that echo the fascist torch rallies of the 1930s—and then make them go viral."[16] Media responses range from derision to chills. The flash mobs, consisting of ten to 150 black-robed, white-masked marchers, were used as an organizing strategy to attract a presumably younger crowd of supporters. Inspired by the Spreelichter (2009), a group that consisted of members of the National Democratic Party of Germany's (NPD) youth organization, the Junge Nationaldemokraten, the protests themselves appeared "*lächerlich*" or ridiculous to some.[17] Indeed, the high drama of the movement's self-presentation elicited parodies and undermining pokes at its apocalyptic theatrics. To others, the YouTube incarnation of the Immortals, accompanied by music from *The Matrix* and slogans that invoked the legacies of German identity, rekindled memories of torch-lit SA marches from an earlier incarnation. Johannes Radke, a journalist who focuses on right-wing extremisms and youth groups, quotes and interprets the Immortals' web-distributed position paper: "It has to do with propaganda—with propaganda that unmistakably identifies and blames the system as the reason for the fact that our people is rapidly approaching its extinction."[18] Further, the rhetoric of imminent death-by-immigration is inflected in another slogan: "Democrats are bringing us the death of our people."[19] After the Bautzen march, which took place on 1 May 2011, the video was posted on YouTube and quickly accumulated 20,000 views. Approximately twenty-five other appearances within this "*Aktionsmodell*" or model of action were made in Hanover, Karlsruhe, Düsseldorf, and elsewhere. On the now dismantled website, as quoted by Andreas Speit, the Unsterblichen define themselves as follows: "The Immortals are young Germans who assemble in public places throughout the country in order to call attention to the deception of the democrats."[20]

Many dismissed the Unsterblichen, especially after Brandenburg's Interior Minister Dietmar Woidke outlawed the "Widerstandsbewegung in Südbrandenburg," led by Marcel Forstmeier.[21] Speit, however, describes the Immortals less as a "group," and more as an "*Aktionsmodell*."[22] The model remains powerful and persuasive. With one strong leader at the core, this self-described resistance movement was the right-wing offspring of Marcel Forstmeier, known for revising the neo-Nazi image and his leadership role in the Spreelichter. The strength of the neo-Nazi scene in Dresden keeps its

muscles flexed with anniversary marches, marking, for example, the bombing of the Frauenkirche, and intervening in the management of historical and traumatic memory. (Dresden's central importance in the emergence of Pegida is not accidental.) Though Pegida itself ostensibly repudiates any connection with the neo-Nazi ideology and practice that elicits escalated state responses, the brainchild of German identitarian politics bears striking similarities to far right's "brain trust."

Facilitated by the use of social media, primarily Facebook, Pegida and its other local expressions self-identify primarily under the rubric of "community organization." Again, it is no surprise that they link to each other, share photos, invite "likes," and generate extreme responses, both pro and con, to extreme postings. The "*Lügenpresse*" (lying press) is reviled; stories of German victims of migrant and refugee violence abound; and every site replicates the sanitized language of the original Pegida's digital declaration.

Thinking Outside the Box?

The use of pseudo-science to fan the flames of Pegida supporters mimics the voice of reason and reality. Here, the self-credentializing internet presence of Professor Dr. Michael Friedrich Vogt (Quer-Denken TV) cohabits with the extreme right in Germany. In a broadcast entitled "Pegida–the answer to the crisis of the German nation?" Vogt interviews Peter Feist, a philosopher with credentials in far-right circles. The interview was ostensibly prompted by the results of a widely publicized survey about Islam and whether it "belongs to Germany," conducted by the conservative Allensbach Institute. According to the results, two-thirds of the respondents answered in the negative, with regional percentages higher in the former east (75 percent) than in the west (60 percent).[23] Vogt opens with reference to this survey and a subsequent online voting poll that yielded even higher negative results. His interview partner aligns the rise of Pegida, anti-Islamic convictions, nativist insistence on German identity and sovereignty, and an anti-government position in general with the facile replacement of historically liberating signifiers. Feist, in particular, recodes xenophobic and racist impulses by interpreting through the lens of revisionist German histories, from the sixteenth-century Peasant War to the Wars of Liberation (1813-1815) and the defeat of Napoleonic imperialism through the 1989 "peaceful revolution." This dialogue situates the former East and its movements within the political position of victorious rebellions–as though German history only boasted grassroots uprisings. Upon closer examination, the histor-

ical signifiers Vogt mobilizes include a focus on fraternal organizations (*Burschenschaften*) with an early history of student resistance to oppressive power structures. Feist's interpretation of Pegida's program exemplifies an apparent objectivity and probing analysis but veils what some consider racist tendencies. Tony Tait, for example, calls attention to Feist's defense of xenophobia as a primal instinct and human right.[24]

The historical continuities between fascism and Stalinist revisionism extend to the current recoding of German history in the service of identitarian and nativist movements. Feist–Margot Honecker's nephew who studied philosophy and is now described as a Marxist philosopher–appears frequently in debates to endorse a pseudo-scientific approach to changing cultures. In the interview with Vogt, for example, Feist attributes the emergence of Pegida from the new federal states as a manifestation of East German history. Dresden plays a particular role. To this day, the Dresden affiliate remains the most influential, with the largest demonstrations, but not without counter-demonstrations. More generally, in the GDR, he maintains, the people were politicized because they were forced to do so under the SED dictatorship, but they also experienced a "successful revolution."[25] He claims further that GDR citizens had an enhanced sense of national identity and positive relationship to the nation. Both conversation partners repudiate the "reeducation" in the West that resulted in any opposition voice incurring the label of "Nazi." Both speak comfortably about the "taboo" topic of "over-foreignization" (*Überfremdung*) as urgent, and while both express an acute awareness of political correctness in Germany, the implicitly xenophobic label passes their lips without pause, thus creating a safe space for taboo topics between them and their audience.

This ostensibly "rational" discussion echoes Feist's more extreme pronouncements as the "pro" voice in political and polemical debates. According to Tait, in the openly left-wing indie website linksunten:

> According to Peter Feist, Pegida is only superficially about Islamization, over-foreignization, and the lying press. "There is a much longer problem behind that … The problem of our national identity and our lacking state sovereignty." The former, national identity, is, at least in Feist's more than 1.5 hour lecture, a 'power of natural law'. Even 'arrested identities' cannot fight against natural law.[26]

The identitarian aspect of the pro-Pegida intellectual does not mask the far-right politics. Tait continues:

> In the realm of the NPD Peter Feist became agitated when he spoke of the future in his lecture: "For this reason I am asking … that the will of the people be accepted. We must stop exporting our Western model of democracy …" "There are more than a few people who say, if one has

> drawn this conclusion, we must accept the will of the people, we do not want a Clash of Culture … for then one would also have to pose the question, does one then have to separate this mix of peoples" … "I think that it belongs to democratic discourse to ask this question in an objective way, to contemplate the consequences."[27]

The link to the more overt and extreme Immortals, the disparaging of democracy, the ventriloquizing of leftist multiculturalism and autonomy, are coterminous with movements in France and the U.S., but also, as we will now see, in North America as a topography of white flight.

Vogt emerges as a doomsayer in his interviews with Eva Herman. An advocate of traditional gender roles and mythologized motherhood, Herman, also author of *Das Eva Prinzip: Für eine neue Weiblichkeit* (The Eva Principle: For a New Femininity, 2006), was fired from her job at the ARD television network in 2007 for praising Hitler's policies to boost the German birth rate.[28] In her work on far-right media strategies and their move into the mainstream, Helga Druxes counts Herman among the formerly credentialed conservative German journalists who, discredited by articulating extremist views, now espouse "right populist esoteric views" and use web-based news broadcasts to ply their trade.[29] In Herman's discussion with Andreas Popp, of the web broadcast "Wissensmanufaktur," and Vogt, both interview partners express their fear of imminent war (with Russia) in Europe.[30] When the topic turns to emigration, Popp resists the label of emigrant (*Auswanderer*), and rationalizes his choice of isolated Cape Breton in Nova Scotia over Canada's more populous west coast in military-strategic inflections–it is easier to reach by air in the event of war in Europe. In cross-referencing Popp's Pegida installment, delivered as a sermon about German identity, the viewer hears Canada described as a land of immigration (*Einwanderungsland*), like the United States and Australia. The political antecedent to this discussion is of course the continued conservative stance against Germany's accepted, in some ways exemplary, status as a land of immigration. In the episodes about the U.S.'s northern neighbor on Quer-Denken, the issue of who has the right to move where is elided. The issue of permanent Canadian residency is, however, raised.

In turning to Vogt, Herman poses the same question. He emphasizes the need for a "*Refugium*" given the current political situation, "*eine Zufluchtsmöglichkeit*" to counter the imminent threat of war–against Russia.[31] The subtext of German identitarian support for Russia and Putin surfaces more legibly in Dresden protest signs that read "Putin, hilf uns!" (Putin, help us!)[32] In addition, he articulates a media crisis that emanates from Brussels. Here, Herman questions him about internet access, painting a ver-

bal picture of Vogt in a cabin (*Holzhütte*), separated from European society, and asks somewhat disingenuously: "Do you even have internet?"[33] In the credits for this online interview, he is identified as the editor/producer, so it becomes clear that he does have access to continue his work as a journalist. But this question shifts the discussion to the question of "community."

Herman navigates the questions to the general theme of establishing a German-speaking *Kolonie*, to use the term employed among German-speaking emigrant communities in South America (and elsewhere) from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, on Cape Breton Island. All refer to Rolf Bouman, a German who emigrated in the mid 1980s and who puts properties on the grid. Also the founder of the Indian Cultural Center, Bouman functions as a middleman between emigrating German, Austrians, and Swiss and the local legal, economic, and cultural institutions. It is worth noting that he is also the subject of a Quer-Denken special regarding his work with Canada's east-coast First Nations. The advice to those who are interested in fleeing Europe echoes and updates the nineteenth-century mentality of German emigration: in the twenty-first century, it intersects with the apocalyptic thinking of the contemporary far right in Europe and North America.

First, the fabric of this "community" of free thinkers who live outside the box and take refuge beyond the borders of Germany consists of prosperous Europeans with incredibly good teeth and disposable incomes, motivated by the imminent threat of war in Europe and disdain for the European Union. The underlying theme of "*Volkstod*," familiar from the radical Immortals raises the racist specter of the Pioneer Little Europe movement in the United States, as disseminated by the white supremacist stormfront.org.[34] Here again we have the example of internet journalism intersecting with sanitized platitudes about "autocracy," living self-sufficiently. The word itself invokes the *Vierjahresplan* (four-year plan) of National Socialism–the emigrants want to live off the land, off the grid, and online. Praise for Bouman even resonates with the chords of nineteenth-century rural nostalgia, but also remains exclusive. Popp endorses people "who speak German, who know the structure of the German thinker."[35] The "structure of a German thinker" includes not only an understanding of local taxes, but also an appreciation of the pristine quality of the nature, the ability to live off the land. Vogt chimes in about the importance of having access to one's own water, and not have interference from the EU or a French purification station.

The identification with First Nations also invokes the German love of Karl May, but also the mythos of the "vanishing race" and alignment with warrior cultures. Throughout the signifying systems of far-right rhetoric, race and

whiteness are subsumed into the politicized issues of German national sovereignty and identitarian entitlements. The advocacy of First Nations' rights by German-speaking Europeans in a self-imposed diaspora begs the question of racial difference, answered in part by the presumed affinity between Germans and Indians. One prevailing identity construct in the 1890s in Europe stemmed from a Nietzschean critique of an ever more effete European man. It is possible to see in the German reception not only of the Native Americans (wanting them to be more "authentic") but also of the "Rough Riders" as a desire for an essentially American warrior that crossed the Atlantic as the signifier of modern masculinity as "American." Julia Stetler's compelling study of Buffalo Bill in Germany offers a range of insights into the transnational history of the "America's National Entertainment," known popularly (if not altogether accurately) as the Wild West Show. With its location at the nexus of authenticity and performance, frontier and empire, and entertainment and edification, the show represented the West to America and the West as America to a host of international audiences. Stetler's analysis of the German audiences' and news reports' admiration of–and even identification with–the "noble savages," represented by the Native American performers, draws in illuminating ways from German identity formation, which included Teutonic tribes' victories over Rome, German romanticism, and the "belated" colonial project in which a then recently united nation (1871), albeit somewhat "aspirationally," identified itself as an Empire.

These historical moments are all invoked by the new right's "brain trust" as precedents for contemporary German masculinity–and an affinity with First Nations. Stetler writes: "American society was equated with youth and sturdiness and infused with masculine virtues and vigor. Europe, in contrast, looked effeminate, soft, and overcultured."[36] In other words, the edge of cultural superiority claimed by Europe, wielded by so many to disparage American culture as derivative and unoriginal, was ultimately damaging to a sense of historical masculinity. The interview partners of German origins and sojourning in Canada reference their presence in the cultural center, the ennobling factors of art and economic security for the Indians who are their neighbors, and highlight the good will that prevails. The Indians, a few Canadians, and overwhelmingly German-speaking emigrants constitute the "mixed" community. The identification between the locals and the emigrants, with their ability to preserve or rekindle ancient ways of living in pristine and self-sufficient nature, become apparent.[37]

In a segment devoted to interviews with Bouman, the topics intersect with others on Indians, weather, education, practical aspects of emigrating or establishing even a temporary vacation home, etc., but the introductory

prose on the YouTube page invokes the "pushing the panic button" argument that serves as subtext and metatext for the entire enterprise:

> The steadily growing community of largely German-speaking emigrants or vacationers has one thing in common: with a clear eye, the people have been following the situation in Europe, whether it is within the EU, where ever greater numbers of people are taking notice, or in Switzerland, and are increasingly of the opinion that it is a necessity to establish a new or second homeland (*Heimat*). And above all to do so before the inevitable Crash and the associated dispossession of a system that is going under.[38]

While the YouTube videos and internet "journalism" may appear to be innocuous tourist promotion, and while extremist groups, such as the Unsterblichen, seem to recede quickly, from flash mob to "flash in the pan," there are striking, perhaps alarming, similarities in the rhetorics that connect the visual culture of Quer-Denken with the separatist practices of Pioneer Little Europe; or the temporary "*Refugium*" of Cape Breton and Nova Scotia. In a controversial campaign from 2009, the Junge Nationaldemokraten, youth wing of the NPD, used graphic novels, comics, and music to recruit young members. An image in one text, which advertises itself as "100% politisch unkorrekt," appears in the comic book, "ducks versus chickens" ("Enten gegen Hühner"), in which the chickens represent decadent minority youth; the ducks represent hard-working, middle-class Germans, and an elite race of white geese fight valiantly to retain the pristine qualities of their natural (national) territory, but are persecuted and defeated. Some are lucky enough to fly away: "To the fatherland, a 'fare thee well'/Salvation lies at the polar pole."[39] The connections among journalists and philosophers and political advisors, such as Aleksandr Dugin—who is a featured speaker at many conferences along with Feist, create a signifying web of self-perpetuating expertise. Similarly, Vogt, Herman, and Popp mobilize the allegory of a superior people searching for refuge from the filth and degradation of the "*Vaterland*" in mythologized peoples and the ancient spaces, such as Dugin's "Arktogaya,"[40] the Junge Nationaldemokraten's northern pole, and Vogt's pristine Nova Scotia. The syntax of these images may eschew extremism, but the intertextual relationships among the visual and verbal signifiers generated by those who flaunt political correctness create a network that links and likes—and has an exit strategy, in case of apocalypse.

Compact

The biographical details of Jürgen Elsässer's career as a teacher, erstwhile left-wing journalist, and outspoken critic of German unification are familiar

after his political about-face. Founder and editor of the right-wing populist magazine *Compact*, Elsässer, who once repudiated German identity, counts himself now among its staunchest advocates. Equally impassioned is his sustained diatribe against Merkel. With photo-shopped, sensationalist covers of Merkel behind bars ("Merkel verhaften?" December 2015), or the Chancellor in a headscarf ("Mutti Multikulti," August 2015), *Compact*'s editor and contributors vilify Merkel, frequently in gendered terms. The cover of the five-year anniversary issue in January 2016 depicts the lower half of a man's face with black thread suturing his lips. The image accompanies the lead article on Merkel's dictatorship and the end of free speech in the Federal Republic. The visitor to the main website can click further to the franchises, which include Compact-Live, Compact conferences, special issues, and Compact-TV. Many far-right mantras reverberate throughout Compact's web presence and self-presentation, such as the demand for freedom of speech and freedom of expression, which, from an extremist viewpoint, has been compromised in Germany by political correctness, anti-democratic politics, and the *Lügenpresse*. The financial nature of the multimedia enterprise prompts a pun on the serious slogan, "Courage to [speak the] truth" (*Mut zur Wahrheit*); it becomes: "Courage to subscribe" (*Mut zum Abo*).[41] In addition to the print magazine, the online offerings incorporate the political, social, and economic grievances of right-wing populism into the message. Elsässer frequently draws from press coverage from consistently critical mainstream media, thereby creating a feedback loop that lends credence to his causes.

The conferences provide an illuminating example of the self-credentializing capacity of populist internet use. In the Quer-Denken broadcasts, Vogt and his collaborators speak with reference to the same lexicon about right-wing refrains: gender mainstreaming, the western threat against Russia, the failure of multiculturalism, and political correctness, among others. The crossover between these themes and the Compact conferences tightens the semantic knot. In addition, the same names and bailiwicks reappear. The 2012 conference was devoted to sovereignty. In 2013, in addition to a workshop about the Euro and the financial future, Compact hosted a controversial event about the family, with the provocative and non-rhetorical question: "Are the people of Europe being abolished?" (Werden die Völker Europas abgeschafft?). The topic and conference, which took place in Leipzig, garnered attention from the mainstream media. Herman, who had initially accepted the invitation to speak, but ultimately withdrew because of internet threats, still provided an audio address about her experiences. According to Compact's website, counter-demonstrations led to physical

violence against the participants, one of whom required hospitalization. They report an attack on the Russian representative and that Thilo Sarrazin's home was vandalized.[42] In the online excerpts from the following conference devoted to peace, Elsässer, in conversation with the moderator Evelin Pietza,[43] opens the broadcast citing the attacks to justify the exclusion of the mainstream press from the fourth conference, held in Berlin with approximately 800 participants; it focused on the imminent threat of war against Russia. Natalia Narotchnitskaya, head of the Institute for Democracy and Cooperation, a Paris-based NGO, echoes the threat to European identity and culture from globalization. She refers repeatedly to the need for authentic, truth-loving Russians and Germans who have the knowledge of geopolitical reality and understanding of global problems to take responsibility for the future. She begins with an expression of gratitude for the courage of Compact to tell the truth in a Europe under a "totalitarian ban" on discussing hot-button issues.[44] Freedom of the press and freedom of expression as fundamental and violated rights recur in the sometimes dizzying, cross-referenced attacks from the populist right.

The fifth Compact conference, convened in October 2015, featured Feist as the closer with an address labeled: "Resistance at Every Level" (*Widerstand auf allen Ebenen!*).[45] Feist, whose historical viewpoints were discussed above, is a constant conversation partner in contemporary populist discourse. The self-described and unrepentant Marxist philosopher excoriated Merkel's asylum policy, insisted on German sovereignty, and extolled the historical lessons of disobedience that enabled, for example, the GDR's peaceful revolution. With great animation, he reiterated his communist credentials and asserted his persistent orthodox Marxism, concluding: "And I won't let anyone in this room tell me that I'm a rightist (*ein Rechter*) because I advocate for the rights of the people …" Like others, he rejected the right-wing label and insisted on his commitment to historical truth and advocacy for human rights. His energetic delivery, punctuated with frequent bursts of applause, concluded with practical matters, specifically, announcements that highlight demonstrations and other public events by Pegida, Bärgida, Legida, and the AfD. Noting the importance of taking discontent into the streets, he exhorted the audience to attend an anti-refugee protest in Berlin, planned by the AfD for 7 November 2015.[46] Feist closed with a remark, directed at an Austrian colleague who spoke about Europe's borders: "Professionally, I am an historian of fortresses, and if help is needed building Fortress Europe, you can contact me."[47]

Conclusion

The transnational, translocal, and multidimensional strategies of far-right publicists and spokesmen coproduce identities through face-to-face and digital networks that ultimately serve the ideological purpose of mainstreaming extremist ideas. With emphasis on German national identity, family values, anti-Islamization, pro-Russian and anti-American viewpoints, anti-immigration, free speech and freedom of expression that accommodates hate speech, and a conservative feminism that is antichoice, the proponents of this ideology essentially are reclaiming citizenship based on rootedness, that is, a motivated and inviolable relationship between identity, culture, and territory, to the exclusion of all others, especially refugees and asylum-seekers. Ruth Wodak describes this populist appeal in terms of "renationalizing tendencies:"

> *renationalizing tendencies* can generally be observed, manifest in new frontiers and borders, new walls which are being erected across Europe to protect the traditional nation state–a Fortress Europe–in times in which globalized media and new communication modes simultaneously allow for an unprecedented speed of sharing news and spreading change. Slogans that prose a return to a homogeneous nation state, the mother tongue and conservative family values, which highlight "pure" Christian white people as the "real" Austrians, Finns, Hungarians or Danes, are voiced ubiquitously, as answers to the many– constructed and real–fears and anxieties.[48]

Recourse to an idea of "Fortress Europe" is the constitutive element of the renationalizing discourses of the populist new right in Germany; this cognitive and political model manifests throughout the transnational right, with inflections based on national political imaginaries. This reassertion of the nation-state, ethnic identity, and cultural entitlements contradicts trends toward postnational and denationalized citizenship while symbolically expressing a great degree of fear and anxiety about globalization.[49]

With gendered critiques of Chancellor Angela Merkel, disdain for the "lying press," and repudiations of right-wing labels, publicists such as Vogt and Elsässer et al. align their non-rational arguments with the more publicly politicized movements, such as Pegida and AfD. With little more than a web address and prosumer-level cameras (professional quality for consumer use) and editing software, they cultivate a web presence that is ultimately unedited, uncensored, and unaccountable. Perhaps the ultimate irony is that they practice with impunity the freedom of speech and expression, mobilizing historical meanings and appropriating the narratives of persecution, genocide, and marginalization, they claim a democratic Federal Republic has denied them.

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Notes

1. Konrad Weiss, "Die neue alte Gefahr. Junge Faschisten in der DDR," first published in *KONTEXT* 5 (189). Written in 1988, Weiss's essay engaged the topic of right-wing extremism in the GDR when it was still a taboo topic in the public sphere, though extensive Stasi files existed about skinheads, along with other targeted youth groups. See http://www.bln.de/k.weiss/tx_gefahr.html, accessed 22 October 2016.
2. Ibid., no page. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.
3. Ibid., no page.
4. Anna Sauerbrey, "The New Face of Racism in Germany," *The New York Times*, 30 December 2015, A23. Online version 29 December 2015; available at http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/30/opinion/the-new-face-of-racism-in-germany.html?_r=0, accessed 22 October 2016.
5. Ibid.
6. The platform of Der Flügel can be found in the Erfurt Resolution dated March 2015, an open declaration with eighteen signatories, led by Höcke's in first position. The resolution articulates points of agreement with AfD, but also laments the party's unwillingness to advocate for nationwide political change: "Die Enttäuschung über das fehlende Bekenntnis der AfD zu einer grundsätzlichen politischen Wende in Deutschland ist in allen Landesverbänden (und vor allem im Osten) mit Händen zu greifen;" available at http://www.derfluegel.de/erfurter-resolution/, accessed 22 October 2016.
7. The case of Dresden's Pegida leader, Lutz Bachmann, who survived posting a picture of himself as Hitler on the internet, demonstrates similar staying power.
8. Tamir Bar-on, *Rethinking the French New Right: Alternatives to modernity* (London, 2013), 8.
9. Clemens Greiner and Patrick Sakdapolrak, "Translocality: Concepts, Applications and Emerging Research Perspectives," *Geography Compass* 7, no. 5 (2013): 373–384, here 373.
10. Ibid., 374.
11. *Deutsche Welle*, "Europe's far right blames migration crisis for Paris attacks," 17 November 2015. Björn Höcke, in a political address covered in the local press, was quoted as saying the following: "'Terroristische Schläfer in Thüringen. Das ist die Realität.'" See Martin Debes, "Muslimische Gesänge im Thüringer Landtag," *Thüringer Allgemeine* 9 July 2015, available at http://www.thueringer-allgemeine.de/web/zgt/politik/detail/-/specific/Muslimische-Gesaenge-im-Thueringer-Landtag-1060143831, accessed 24 October 2016.

12. On "self-credentializing" internet use by Alexandr Dugin and Kevin MacDonald, see Alexandar Mihailovic, "Hijacking Authority: Academic Neo-Aryanism and Internet Expertise," in *Digital Media Strategies of the Far Right in Europe and the United States*, ed. Patricia Anne Simpson and Helga Druxes (Lanham, 2015), 83-102, esp. 84. There Mihailovic writes that both "are intent upon the construction of self-validating scholarly subcultures that have a strong diegetic component with specific appeal to non-rationalist modes of discourse, while intersecting with larger communities of political action." These strategies, perhaps given the close association between German and Russian far-right proponents, overlap with those of Pegida, Quer-Denken's Vogt, and Compact's Elsässer.
13. At the time of writing, the Pegida USA Facebook page, with its imperative banner, "Stop the Islamization of the USA," had more than 24,739 likes. See https://www.facebook.com/usa.pegida, accessed 22 October 2016.
14. Fabian Virchow, "The 'Identitarian Movement': What Kind of Identity? Is It Really A Movement?" in Simpson and Druxes (see note 12), 177-190, here 180. In connection with the identitarian model, Andreas Popp foregrounds the strengths of racially "intact" nations and while calling for more widespread protests, he exhorts all to examine the causes, not the symptoms. He points the blaming finger less at Islamization and more definitively at Americanization and global capital (2015). He identifies American imperialism and destabilizing resource-rich countries as the source of Islamic migration; while he purports to proffer scholarly arguments, he attributes the rise of Pegida to censorship in the mainstream media. The angst of the "*gut besorgten Bürger*" (rightly concerned citizens) propels citizens into the streets. The video has 166,275 views. See "Drohte eine Islamisierung oder eine US-Amerikanisierung Europas?" 11 January 2015; available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ziN7dn5IbLA, accessed 22 October 2016.
15. Virchow (see note 14), 177-178.
16. Anthony Barkewicz and Braden Goyette. "Neo-Nazi Flash Mobs Strike German Cities, YouTube." *NY Daily News. The New York Daily News.* 14 August 2012.
17. Johannes Radke, "Flashmobs gegen die Demokratie," *Zeit Online*, 21 March 2012; available at http://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2012-03/unsterbliche-flashmobs-neonazis-bautzen, accessed 22 October 2016.
18. "Es geht um Propaganda–um Propaganda, die unmissverständlich das System als Grund dafür erkennt und benennt, dass unser Volk seinem Tod entgegengeht." Radke (see note 17).
19. "Demokraten bringen uns den Volkstod." Quoted in Radke, ibid.
20. "Die Unsterblichen sind junge Deutsche, die sich bundesweit auf öffentlichen Plätzen zusammenfinden, um auf das Scheinwerk der Demokraten aufmerksam zu machen." Andreas Speit is interviewed and the video, "Nationalsozialismus im schicken Style," is linked in Daniel Müller, "Update für Nazis," *Zeit-Online*, 21 March 2012.
21. At least one march violated the ban. See "'Spreelichter' brennen offenbar weiter," 12 February 2014, available at http://www.endstation-rechts.de/news/kategorie/kameradschaften/artikel/spreelichter-brennen-offenbar-weiter.html, accessed 22 October 2016.
22. Speit video with Müller article, ibid.
23. Stefan von Borstel, "Für die meisten gehört der Islam nicht zu Deutschland," *Die Welt* online, 6 October 2015.
24. Tony Tait, "Elsässer-Show mit rassistischem Referenten Peter Feist am 18. Februar,"17 February 2015; available at https://linksunten.indymedia.org/de/node/135165.
25. Michael Friedrich Vogt, "Pegida–die Antwort auf die Krise der deutschen Nation?" Interview with Peter Feist. 29 July 2015. Quer-DENKEN TV; available at http://quer-denken.tv/index.php/mfv-tv/1530-pegida-die-antwort-auf-die-krise-der-deutschen-nation, accessed 22 October 2016.
26. "Laut Peter Feist gehe es bei Pegida nur oberflächlich um Islamisierung, Überfremdung und Lügenpresse. 'Dahinter steckt ein viel längeres Problem. ... Das Problem unserer nationalen Identität und unserer fehlenden staatlichen Souveränität.' Erstere, also die nationale Identität, sei, so Feist in seinem gut einstündigen Vortrag, eine 'naturgesetzliche

Gewalt'. Gegen dieses Naturgesetz könnten auch 'Identitätsgestörte' nichts ausrichten,'" Tait (see note 24).

27. "Im Bereich der NPD bewegte sich Peter Feist, als es in seinem Vortrag um die Zukunft ging. 'Ich plädiere daher dafür ... den Willen der Völker zu akzeptieren. Wir müssen aufhören, unser westliches Demokratiemodell zu exportieren.' ... 'Es gibt nicht wenige Leute die sagen, wenn man diese Konsequenz gezogen hat–wir müssen den Willen der Völker akzeptieren, wir wollen keinen Clash of Culture ..., dann muss man eben aber auch die Frage stellen, muss man dann dieses Völkergemisch wieder separieren.' ... 'Ich finde, zum demokratischen Diskurs gehört, auch diese Frage mal sachlich zu stellen, über die Konsequenzen nachzudenken.'" Ibid.
28. Helga Druxes, "Manipulating the Media: The German New Right's Virtual and Violent Identities," in Simpson and Druxes (see note 12), 123-139, here 125.
29. Ibid.
30. Eva Herman, "Leben im kanadischen Neuschottland;" available at http://quer-denken.tv/index.php/kanada/1546-leben-im-kanadischen-neuschottland, accessed 11 July 2015.
31. Michael Friedrich Vogt, "Zu Hause in Cape Breton, Canada." Quer-Denken.tv. 1 December 2014; available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=utJeOljnpqE.
32. Stefan Locke, "'Putin, hilf uns!'" *FAZ online.* 16 December 2014; available at http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/noch-mehr-zulauf-fuer-pegida-in-dresden-13324123.html, accessed 22 October 2016 .
33. Herman (see note 30).
34. Patricia Anne Simpson, "Pure Hate: The Political Aesthetic of Prussian Blue," in Simpson and Druxes (see note 12), 229-247, especially 240, 242-243.
35. Herman (see note 30).
36. Julia Simone Stetler, "Buffalo Bill's Wild West in Germany. A Transnational History." UNLV eses/Dissertations/Professional. Papers/Capstones. Paper 1634 (2012), 145.
37. In the context of the interview, the participants have occasion to discuss Canada as a "*Männerland*," though Popp, while admitting there is little shopping and no *Gründerzeit* architecture, also insists that it is attractive yet different. Vogt, echoing the ideologies of nineteenth-century immigration recruitment brochures to South America, insists on the quality of life for families. A deeper consideration of the gender roles represented in this matrix goes beyond the focus of this paper, but is warranted.
38. "Die ständig wachsende überwiegend deutschsprachige Gemeinschaft von Auswanderern oder Urlaubern hat eines gemeinsam: Mit wachem Blick haben die Menschen die Lage in Europa, sei es in der EU, wo es inzwischen immer mehr Leuten auffällt, oder in der Schweiz verfolgt und halten es zunehmend für eine Notwendigkeit, sich außerhalb Europas und vor allem rechtzeitig vor dem unausweichlichen Crash und der damit verbundenen Enteignung eines niedergehenden Systems eine neue oder eine zweite Heimat zu schaffen." Quer-Denken, "Zu Hause in Cape Breton, Kanada," no date; available at http://quer-denken.tv/index.php/kanada/43-zu-hause-in-cape-breton-kanada, accessed 24 October 2016.
39. "Dem Vaterland ein 'Lebe wohl'/Rettung liegt Richtung Polarpol." "Enten gegen Hühner," Junge Nationaldemokraten (2009): 29; available at http://www.npd-kiel.de/FlugBlaetter/Flu_Huehner_1.htm, accessed 22 October 2016.
40. Alexandar Mihailovic, "Hijacking Authority: Academic Neo-Aryanism and Internet Expertise," in Simpson and Druxes (see note 12), 83-102, here 92.
41. *Compact* magazine's website. https://www.compact-online.de/compact-spezial-nr-8-asyl-das-chaos-so-kommt-der-buergerkrieg-zu-uns/, accessed 22 October 2016.
42. Elsässers Blog, "Deutsche Qualitätsmedien verschweigen Gewalt gegen russische Abgeordnete auf der Compact-Konferenz," 30 November 2013; available at https://juergenelsaesser.wordpress.com/2013/11/30/deutsche-qualitatsmedien-verschweigen-gewalt-gegen-russische-abgeordnete-auf-der-compact-konferenz/, accessed 22 October 2016.

43. Pietza (variations of her name include Evelyn and Eveline, also Piètza) is elsewhere described as a journalist, peace activist, and political publicist; she writes about topics that include conflict in the Ukraine and its historical causes. In the video report, Elsässer notes that she is a newcomer to the Compact conferences. She writes for Gruppe 42, a website established by former Pirate Party representative Jens Seipenbusch, who, along with representative Andreas Popp, left the party with a total of forty-two disillusioned members to critique its political structure. See Manuel Bewarder, "Ex-Piratenspitze gründet eigenen Flügel," *Die Welt* online, 17 February 2012, available at https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article13874321/Ex-Piratenspitze-gruendet-eigenen-Fluegel.html, accessed 22 October 2016.
44. "Frieden mit Russland–Für ein souveränes Europa!" 22 November 2014 Berlin; available at https://www.compact-online.de/friedenskonferenz/referenten-friedenskonferenz/, accessed 22 October 2016.
45. Feist, closing remarks, 28 October 2015; available at https://tv.compact-online.de/widerstand-auf-allen-ebenen-peter-feist-auf-der-compact-freiheitskonferenz/, accessed 22 October 2016.
46. Estimates of the actual number of demonstrators vary, approximately 5,000, but the counterdemonstration had an admittedly modest turnout at around 800. See *Deutsche Welle*, "Thousands march in Berlin anti-refugee demo," 7 November 2015; available at http://www.dw.com/en/thousands-march-in-berlin-anti-refugee-demo/a-18834499, accessed 22 October 2016.
47. Feist (see note 45).
48. Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean* (London, 2015), 183-184.
49. On the former, see Saskia Sassen, "Toward Post-National and Denationalized Citizenship" in *Handbook of Citizenship Studies*, ed. Engin F. Isin and Bryan S. Turner (London, 2002), 277-292.