

Anthropological deficits after writing *Postsocialism*

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Writing this introduction, it dawned on me that we have been tackling the same questions since Tamás Hofer published his ‘anthropologists and native ethnographers’ article in *Current Anthropology* (Hofer 1968). Hofer was 86 years old when he died in 2016, and I am somewhat disquieted to note that according to Google Scholar his trailblazing article has been cited a total of 77 times in the past fifty years worldwide! If that is the case, as I am sure it is a close approximation, then there must be something terribly wrong. Otherwise, why would we anguish over the same questions about what anthropology is, and why it evolved so differently from, say, the way it is practiced in the UK, or the US for that matter? What makes us so disparate that we do not seem to make any serious dent in the anthropological Berlin Wall? Maybe we already have or never will or just it is the age-old question again about the glass being half empty or half full. When the Teaching and Learning Anthropology Network of EASA (TANEASA) started in the mid-1990s, it was Ulf Hannerz that sounded the alarm-bell by stating that “while we know a lot about what we do in the field, we know practically nothing about our own scholarship inside the classroom” (Kürti 2004: x). At the same time, Peter Skalník also embarked upon a similar venture by editing several volumes on his own to bring the vicissitudes of East European anthropological scholarship into the open (Skalník 2000, 2002, 2005). In the following years, several volumes appeared discussing anthropology in various national settings. With Peter I have found a common platform, thanks to our regular engagement in European Association of Social Anthropologists/Association Européenne des Anthropologues Sociaux (EASA for short) conferences, and identified key questions in our volume *Postsocialist Europe: Anthropological Perspectives from Home* (Kürti and Skalník 2009). We invited contributors to *Postsocialist Europe* who were living and working in East Europe, save our now late friend Christian Giordano of Switzerland who

wrote the afterword. Whether we have managed to answer why anthropology in Eastern Europe has been progressing in rudimentary often discombobulated ways is not for me to say. I am nevertheless confident that we have provided some definitive answers that others also raised elsewhere (Barrera-González, Heintz, and Horolets 2017; Bošković and Hann, 2013; Cervinkova, Buchowski, and Uherek, 2015; Čapo, 2014; Geană, 1999; Giordano, 2014; Hann et al, 2007; Hann, Sárkány and Skalník, 2005; Kockel, Nic Craith, and Frykman, 2012).

The current special issue of *Cargo* with contributions by six colleagues represents another complex narrative of how anthropological scholarship has been progressing in the East. Some of the chapters may be encouraging, others may cause some raised eyebrows. All the better, nobody is forced to read it, and we know that truth can hurt sometimes. I heartily agree with Peter Skalník that we as citizens living and working east of the Elbe, to use the phrase uttered many times since the 18th century in reference to the eastern half of the German/Austrian realm, have things in common that tie us together. And I am not referring to globalizing concepts such as culture, language or religion but to more basic and influential political economic determinants. The editor lists four of these, but individual authors have many more: schizophrenia, nationalism, communism, and the German intellectual and educational tradition (*Bildung*). I would only add one more element which is the *raison d'être* of this edited collection: anthropological deficit (Kürti 2008: 29). And here we arrive at the crux of the matter that I will address here briefly.

It has been stressed earlier and I can only stress again that neither East European anthropology nor its Western counterpart are homogeneous and monochrome. Anthropology is composed of both systematic and edifying paradigms swinging between scientific, humanistic and aesthetic pursuits (Rapport and Overing 2000: 248-249). We do not live in a singular and bounded existence; our experiences and scholarly world are plural and multi-faceted. Many colleagues possess excellent personal and institutional contacts with western institutions and scholars, some manage to participate in joint projects and even publish profusely in the West. Others, relegated to regional knowledge parks, publish local monographs, and remain anchored to a single research subject for decades, are less fortunate. We are obviously different, living and working within the purview of our post-communist legacies. That monstrous tradition carries one important burden, the separation between the capital and regional centres. The primacy of national capitals, for instance the Big Bs (Belgrade, Bratislava, Bucharest, or Budapest), continues to dominate intellectual landscapes in Eastern Europe since major research institutions, national academies and universities are located there. No such centre-periphery conflict seems to exist in the US, or the

UK. The universities in Washington, D.C. do not compete with those in New York, Chicago, or California. Oxford, London, or Cambridge are no superior intellectual centres than Edinburgh, St. Andrews or Brighton in the UK. The East European academic hydrocephaly, to use a familiar Hungarian expression, is both symbolic and real as it continues to determine the allocation of both intellectual as well as monetary resources.

Living in the countryside and working in a regional university, I experience this on a daily basis, but I am not sorry after spending considerable years in New York and Budapest. Cities, in fact all cities, such as Cluj, Ljubljana, Szeged, Pardubice, Banská Bystrica, or Kraków exude an aura of *Genius Loci*. Research institutions and university departments there, though often these are one and the same, publish their yearbooks or monograph series making them uniquely identifiable. Yet, and I know this from personal experience, information and funding could be diverted by those working in capitals, and conferences or publications from the countryside rarely, if ever, make any difference in so-called national scholarship. Since I returned to Hungary and worked in different universities, attended a whole range of conferences and have been involved in a variety of research projects, my experience is that Tamás Hofer was certainly right about one thing. East Europeans produce differently; at times we have to because our intellectual energies are constrained and diverted for various reasons. The lack of financial resources is mind-boggling, local hierarchies may present insurmountable obstacles to intellectual freedom, and academic politics is a dog-eat-dog world. I often hear colleagues from the countryside uttering similar horror stories. Some of these can actually be read in these chapters, and if the past three decades are any indication of what the future holds, we can foresee many more narratives of that kind.

It is axiomatic by now that the collapse of communist states transformed Eastern European societies dramatically. Education and the sciences have not been immune to these transformations as various left and right-wing governments fought bitter battles to gain legitimacy. Godina rightly suggests that with all the changes that have taken place since 1990, a certain de-professionalization characterizes sociocultural anthropology in Eastern Europe. Just how this turn came about needs to be addressed. It is instructive to remember here briefly Chris Hann's involvement with Hungarian colleagues and bureaucrats during the 1970s and how he was reminded "on toning down" his discussion of increasing social inequalities in rural Hungary (Hann 1995: xiii). Of course, repressive regimes and their bureaucracy work systematically and many colleagues who eagerly wrote under the sway of Marxist-Leninist dogma even during the 1980s emerged as proponents of openness, democracy and liberal Western capitalism in the 1990s.

A related question is why many colleagues educated in related disciplines (literature, sociology, folklore studies, etc) are doggedly determined to claim anthropological feathers instead of remaining true to their original fields. Moreover, critical analyses are badly needed to ascertain how 'opportunism' continues to hamper a healthier scholarly praxis, and how introvert disciplines such as Hungarology (*magyarságtudomány*) in Hungary, Czech nationgraphy/peoplegraphy, and peoplelogy or ethnoanthropology in Poland maintain their institutional primacy. This is a serious matter and I have provided some examples earlier with reference to Romanian and Hungarian scholarly animosities (Kürti 2002; for similar cases, see Halpern and Kideckel 2000).

The marginalization of Eastern and Central Europe has long been our obsession, but there are some nations more marginalized than others. Russia has been by far the most privileged scholarly subject in anthropology, its sheer size and population not to mention its political and economic weight warrant this to some extent (Golomshtok, 1933; Field, 1946; Krader, 1956; more recently, Baiburin, Kelly, and Vakhtin 2012). But who remembers the once fashionable detour of Russian national character studies legitimated by Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead and Geoffrey Gorer? What we should not forget are the classic pioneer *émi-grés* from the Eastern part of Europe who carved out a well-deserved place for themselves in anthropology; Maria Czaplicka, Bronislaw Malinowski, and Ernest Gellner immediately come to mind. The names of Géza Róheim, Andras E. Laszlo and Georges Devereux (György Dobó) could be also mentioned for they invented idiosyncratic versions of medical and psychoanalytic anthropology, the former two in America, the latter in France (Kürti 2012). However, to analyse the names and contributions of *émigrés* from Poland, Hungary, Romania, Austria and Czechoslovakia will have to be taken up elsewhere. It seems that scholars from the Baltic states are slowly making their way to the international stage of anthropology. That is why I read Vytis Ciubrinskas' recent contribution with interest. He analyses what influence the Singing Revolution had on the 'Sovietized' disciplines of ethnology and sociocultural anthropology in Lithuania. His is a personal anthropological perspective: from the mid-1980s, when he was a doctoral student in ethnology, until the 2010s, when he became part of the establishment as a university professor of social and cultural anthropology. His concern is to shed light on how cultural nationalism promoted by the Singing Revolution, with its ancient and traditional folk culture, opposed Soviet multicultural and international socialist culture. As Ciubrinskas argues the development within the Lithuanian academic sphere looks promising but academic opportunism, where institutions utilize the fashionable anthropological label to attract students, is a cause for concern. Moreover, there is a snag in the system as a legitimate

doctoral program in sociocultural anthropology is nowhere in sight thanks to government bureaucracy. It seems to be a current trend, not only in Lithuania but elsewhere in the former Soviet bloc as well, that doctoral students have two distinct possibilities: either to enter a multidisciplinary PhD program at home, or leave and carry out doctoral studies and defend their dissertation in sociocultural anthropology at a European, Canadian or USA institution.

In contrast with Ciubrinskas, Alexandru Iorga begins by looking at Romanian folkloristics and ethnography as two disciplines entrusted with collecting and archiving national culture, a dubious and highly contested notion but mostly understood as dealing with 19-20th century autochthonous peasant traditions. He focuses on the interwar period by highlighting some of the interesting developments (i.e. the unique Gusti School), but which did not produce a truly multidisciplinary orientation. However, Iorga makes clear that the centralized structure of Romanian ethnography and folklore, under the umbrella of the Romanian Academy of Sciences, served only ideological interests during state socialist time, a situation that has not changed significantly since the collapse of communism after 1990. Although there is now a legitimate anthropological orientation within the Medical Sciences of the Romanian Academy, ethnography and folklore exist separately within the confines of the Constantin Brăiloiu Institute of Ethnography of the Romanian Academy section for Art, Architecture and Audio-Visual. One wonders how such a bifurcation of disciplines, both inward and outward looking, will manage to exist symbiotically in the future and whether the exotic others - in the image of tradition-ridden peasant or, alternately, post-socialist labourers working in multinational companies, or even the ever-fashionable Roma traders - will continue in the numerous publications produced more or less for international consumption.

In a similar context, Vintilă Mihăilescu argues perceptively that Romania was not following a different path from other East European countries - ethnography and folkloristics both served nation-building strategies in the inter-war years and during the decades of Romanian national communism. One of the most criticized aspects of the period was the Song to Romania festivals ("*Cîntarea României*"), massive folkloric pageants of songs, music and dance by staged village groups extolling progress made by the socialist state. Similarly, the Hungarian Pearly Bouquet (*Gyöngyösbokréta*) festivals of the inter-war period were also an elite-led state sponsored populist movement. However, the two were quite contradictory to Singing Revolution as described by Ciubrinskas. Notwithstanding, Song to Romania and Pearly Bouquet needs to be compared in detail as populist cultural movements to highlight their actual ideological and economic consequences for the local communities where they took root. For what Mihăilescu refers to as the

scholarly idea about the existence of 'true folklore' attached to timeless peasant tradition has been firmly cemented in alternative subcultures in both countries; in addition, such *idée fixe* serves as an ideological justification of long-distance cultural nationalism. In Hungary, the 'dance-house method' of pedagogy – teaching peasant folklore, music and dance from books, films and village elders – was awarded by UNESCO in 2011 for the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices. One wonders that such 'true folklore' ever existed but to enthusiasts Béla Bartók's lamentation in 1907 that folk music was in its final hours has been a wake-up-call for enthusiasts ever since (Kürti 2019: 181; Malvinni 2004: 242). Inexorably science and politics make strange bedfellows and singing and dancing revolutions go hand in hand with recurrent economic reforms and salient political reshuffling of governments and national elites in Eastern Europe.

Interestingly, most contributors to this special issue explicitly lament the fact that while western, mostly French, British, and US sociocultural anthropology has brought limited rejuvenation into national disciplines major questions and problems have multiplied in its path. It is certain that academic disciplines are constantly in process and, as they are, may take decades and new generations to change. As it is, certain national schools may be more vigorous than others, some lag behind in their application of new ideas, methods and issues. There is not one well-trodden path in nationalizing western anthropology. Moreover, and this has not been adequately discussed previously, influential personalities, individual contacts matter tremendously. During the 1980s, heads of departments and institutions in East-Central Europe, and I knew few in Hungary and Romania, adamantly believed in once-and-for-all ideas concerning their disciplinary and institutional standing. Abhorring any change, including withering away the party-state together with their own status quo, they allowed their own version of western theories to take root in 'their' ivory towers. During the 1980s, they were often the founders of so-called ethnology departments or professional ethnology organizations, and by so doing granted a modicum of blood transfusion into old-school ethnography and folkloristics. By the beginning of the 1990s, the new spectre was haunting, the spectre of sociocultural anthropology. Jumping on the democratization band-wagon, many realized that institutional freedom and democracy were mortgaged to the notion of establishing cultural anthropology as the most independent, democratic and legitimate discipline. One consequence of this was that the first generation of apprentices who managed to take over the batons from their masters embarked upon crafting virulent forms of anthropology. What resulted from this coarse revolution is what is aptly described in this volume.

And what exactly is this kind of anthropology? There has been considerable confusion about this ever since its establishment in the 1990s. As is the case in

most East European countries the label anthropology refers to physical anthropology and sociocultural anthropology slowly replace ethnology or ethnography by borrowing methods and theory from British or French schools at best, or at worst by introducing an amalgam of US and Western European (German, Scandinavian) theories. Actually, a catch-all program, a disjointed sort of anthropology with a good dosage of philosophy and post-modern literary theory without a recognizable orientation and political commitment transcending the pitfalls of academic elitism. It is this chaotic individualism, false promise of liberal tactics and diversity that gives most of us cause for concern. Often, departments grant degrees in anthropology without having any faculty members trained in that discipline or possessing diplomas in anthropology per se. The Bologna-directives unified but at the same time confused the situation for teaching anthropology. In Hungary one can earn diploma of “BA, cultural anthropologist”, “BA, ethnographer” or “MA, cultural anthropologist” with questionable specifications (i.e. “visual” or “applied”). One of my acquaintances has proudly claimed: “I earned my PhD in sociology but actually what I do is anthropology.” His connections paved the way for him to offer courses in an anthropology department. *Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose*. Furthering the already confused state of affairs, colleagues with PhDs from US, French or British universities are often ostracized and side-tracked by their fellow countrymen. Branding them as deviant black sheep is rampant and marginalization may result in radical changes in their life strategies. More often than not, they have become more resilient as they distance themselves from established academic hierarchy by reassuring their identities rather than fitting into a mould determined by their peers.

Not all is lost, however. When one looks at the anthropology of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Romania, Hungary or Russia to mention only a few countries, the diversity, colour and experimentations eventually do prevail. Aside from domestic publications, recent monographs by European presses such as LIT Verlag, Sean Kingston, Berghahn Books or Routledge amply illustrate the growing inclusion of East European scholars in international publishing. Looking at some of the recently published titles, one cannot but notice the preponderance of characteristically East European topics. Titles of exotic ‘other’, Gypsy/Roma populations, remain abundant as Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and the southern (Balkan?) states provide plenty on this subject for some time to come (cf. van Baar and Kóczé 2020). With so much intellectual energy and diverse policy implications, not to mention all the efforts and funding offered, the working and living conditions of Gypsies (*cigányok* in Hungarian) are far from ideal. Aside from the vocal token Roma activists in local, national and international politics and the media, the situation of Gypsies in Hungary has been continually deteriorating.

In comparison, anthropological studies of other minorities in Hungary are few and far between. I have yet to read an anthropological monograph on Slovaks, Greeks or Rusyns in Hungary. That is why the study by John Swanson on ethnic Germans in Hungary is a welcome addition to remedy this hiatus (Swanson 2017).

Another hallmark of East Europeanist anthropology is peasantry, a class of people that lost its vitality and means of production and reproduction already by the turn of the 19-20th centuries. The Soviet system of collectivized agriculture only added to the demise of peasant land tenure and animal husbandry. Lawrence Krader prophesized earlier for the Soviet Union that this fundamental change “will bring about the disappearance of the Russian peasant” (Krader, 1956: 719). Research on this by both home-grown ethnographers and foreign-born anthropologists attest to this destruction within the Soviet orbit. While the latter managed to detail the consequences of collectivization and contradictions of socialist state farming, for nationalized ethnography and folkloristics “remote regions”, “moral economies”, and “national border cultures” have remained epicentres of historical significance and mythical past (Kürti, 2001: 20-21). Consequently, villagers and rural producers of such terrain must carry intangible/tangible heritage as they have been singled out as primordial trustees, both producers and carriers of ethnonational traditions. Yet, agricultural production today is a far cry from servitude and tilling the soil with an ox-pulled hoe. Today’s aspiring farmers do not sing folksongs and never kick up their heels dancing csárdás but enjoy watching folkloric revival ensembles doing that. Farmers today drive four-wheel pick-up trucks and are hopelessly tied to satellite technology, EU-subsidies and multinational corporations producing agrochemicals (Dow, Bayer, Syngenta) and the latest farm machinery (Deere, Kubota). Obviously, dressage or show jumping do not compare to medieval cavalry warfare, just as present-day pottery-making does not replicate craftsmanship of a bygone era. Peasant arts and crafts thrive solely in Lalaland of Disneyfied tourism and national pedagogy and since I know few colleagues who profit from such industry, I digress.

Mutatis mutandis and true to anthropology’s diverse orientation, there are more up-to-date subjects anchored to 1989-1990 and the post-socialist quagmire that followed the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Fashionable topics abound today across the post-socialist landscape uniting us in a mutually inclusive cross-disciplinary framework: urban restructuring to replace dreary housing complexes, the massive flux of people into new religious organizations and political parties, rising unemployment and poverty from the closings of state firms, or alternately celebrating the creation of a new working class facilitated by the ever increasing presence of multinational corporations from the Baltics to the Balkans. Still more engaging studies have been connected to specific national events that

determine anthropological scholarly output as has been the case, for instance, with the Balkan War (see for example, Halpern and Kideckel 2000; Kirin and Povrzanović, 1996).

Are we East Europeans unique among anthropologists? We are I would argue, but we are not united. Are there commonalities to our enterprises in Belgrade, Budapest, Vilnius, Bucharest, Moscow or Prague? I would argue that our commonality stems from the experience of the recent socio-economic upheaval and the diverse knowledge of “really-existing” socialisms. Names and labels are often misleading writes Sokolovskiy, a colleague from Moscow, and it is true that our fieldwork experiences are multifarious and salient. Since fieldwork is space and time specific, locations visited at various intervals add to the enrichment of our knowledge of sociocultural change. Those of us with long-term fieldwork hindsight are well aware that revisiting families and informants befriended in previous research will alter our ideas contributing to a more stereoscopic vision both of anthropology and Eastern Europe.

The velvet revolution brought the collapse of the Soviet empire in Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Hungary, elsewhere this resulted in blood-baths (Romania, Yugoslavia), bringing unprecedented changes into the lives of millions across the Eurasian continent. Was that more of a significant socio-economic and demographic upheaval than, say, the Neolithic revolution, or the mayhem caused by the bubonic plague? More specific and perhaps tragic because we experienced its immediate side-effects but not anymore compelling. Velvet revolutions are ongoing facets of human existence just as wars. Actually, the names of Lech Wałęsa and Václav Havel can be suggested as comrades in arms with Nelson Mandela, who equally was the man of the times in bringing a relatively peaceful end to South African apartheid. More often than not, the Prague Spring can be seen as common experiences in various disguises all over the world. Similarly, the destruction of the symbols and signs of previous rulers and regimes are natural reactions to suffering, injustices and collective adrenalin. The *damnatio memoriae*, or condemnation of memory, caught up with Saddam Hussein in Baghdad in 2003, but such occurrences took place in 1956 in Budapest, when Joseph Stalin’s monument was pulled down by enraged citizens, and in 1871 when the bronze statue of Napoleon I was dismantled actually on the spot where the monument of Henry IV had previously stood. And the list could go on and on but the truth is that statues will be defaced and destroyed just as new ones, some even uglier than their predecessors’ will take their place. Changing street names to deny previous histories has occurred almost everywhere in the former East bloc.

Skalnik’s argument for East European anthropology’s “schizophrenic character” might be a bit harsh but it is to the point. Focussing on the internal others

(i.e. Gypsies and Jews) often serve exoticizing projects for preserving majority ideology in nation-state contestations. But such split mentality has, we must admit, been part and parcel of western anthropologies as well. Remarkably, in the East European setting such a demarcation seems to survive after the third decade of the 21st century. Even in Russia, as Sokolovskiy describes, split-scenario anthropology favours majoritarian nation-state construction. What happened, for instance, in Austrian and German anthropology – a complete make-over and critical reflection of national disciplines (Khittel, Plankensteiner and Six-Hohenbalken, 2004) – has not, we must admit, taken place in Eastern Europe.

Well, what about joining forces? Are these diverse strands and disciplinary directions, ranging in scope as described by Sokolovskiy in Russia, Iorga and Mihăilescu in Romania, or Ciubrinskas in Lithuania and Skalník in the Czech/Slovak Republics, be put to good use, to mount a unified face and programme? Or, can we thwart dilettantism and regurgitation of superficial, tribe-hopping tales telling coupled with celebrations of folkloristic revivals embedded in East European nationalistic disciplines? In Godina's view the answer to these questions is simple. In her analysis, she sees possibilities and flexibilities in the discipline. While she recognizes the difficulties across the post-socialist states, she argues that the future of sociocultural anthropology, in fact social sciences as a whole, lies in the "productive cooperation" among anthropologists working in western and eastern traditions.

Not only Godina, Peter Skalník and myself have been somewhat optimistic about the direction anthropology might take in countries burdened with the legacy of socialist *Volkskunde*/Völkerkunde dichotomy. In light of the development in Eastern Europe since publishing *Postsocialist Europe* in 2009, however, the picture of anthropology, both as a university discipline and a more encompassing research agenda outside academia, is far from rosy. While there are signs suggesting a departure from previous navel gazing, some aspects derail the development of an up-to-date and internationally acceptable anthropology. Not only in states as described by my colleagues in this issue of *Cargo* but also in Hungary we find cases bordering on the ridiculous. Let me continue the example cited by Peter Skalník. In the university ranking full professorship is achieved through a nomination-selection procedure. Candidates, already with a German-type of habilitation, may be nominated by their universities to the Hungarian Accreditation Committee (MAB). That body established stringent criteria asking for number of publications, years of teaching and so on; some already speak of the anthropological citation impact h-index (Hirsch-index)! The whole system is subverted by the Soviet system known as 'academic doctor', a title granted by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The two types of institutionalization – universities and the Academy

of Sciences – are separate on the surface but, in reality, obtaining the academy's doctorate is a sure ticket to university professorship. As Peter Skalník describes the situation in Poland, the Czech and Slovak Republics, the two doctorate-system competes side-by-side in Hungary as well; one granted by the Academy of Sciences, the other by the Ministry (the nominee receives his or her diploma directly from the President of the Republic). Promotion to an academic doctorate is standardized but highly constrained by criteria decided by a privileged board composed of 'academic doctors' of each discipline. And we have come full circle now: who and with what diploma sits on these boards? Perhaps this is easier to see and understand if I offer an example. One colleague in his sixties at my university was rejected for promotion to professorship by the MAB. In the same department his junior colleague managed to earn the 'academic doctor' title and consequently was promoted to professorship by the university. What this illustrates is the half-hearted attempt to dismantle the Soviet system of institutions as the Hungarian academic doctorate remains the tabooed golden calf.

The final point I wish to make relates to the question of what this all means and, perhaps more poignantly, what will happen from now on? And this is where anthropologists should aim to solidify their deserved place in the frictious hierarchy of scientific endeavours both at home and internationally. As anthropologists, we have the intellectual know-how to contest and challenge prevailing notions of power, equality and the redistribution of resources. I am not naive in thinking that anthropology has a magic wand to solve global problems but I know that possibilities emerge from time to time to make our voices heard. After all, someone will have to explain the meaning and significance of the social and political engineering taking place around us. As I write this introduction to a volume following our work published more than a decade ago (Kürti and Skalník 2009), we are witnessing intolerable processes on the world stage. US president Trump has offered a peace plan ("Peace to Prosperity: A Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People") that actually ignited mass protests and waves of violence in Gaza and the West Bank. Following Brexit and the closure of the Honda and BMW factories in addition to branch liquidation by HSBC and Barclays, citizens of Great Britain and Northern Ireland may just wonder if their country is really that 'great' anymore. In Germany killing-sprees seem to be the order of the day as far-right shooting has increased five-fold since 2012 (more recently in Halle and Hanau). In Poland and Hungary, illiberal copy-cat governments nationalize and privatize feverishly everything at will. Romanians and Poles have voted with their feet as millions seek betterment for themselves and their families in Western Europe. As Hungary continues to ward off Arab and Asian migrants by erecting walls along its southern border and passing laws

restricting naturalization and working permits, France, Great Britain, Sweden and Italy have been transformed from nations of emigration ending after WWI to nations of immigration following WWII and onwards. These massive population movements will have serious repercussions on the demographics of the aging and shrinking European local populations. And to top all that experts now agree that Coronavirus (COVID-19) has grown to epic proportion requiring exceptional measures globally. Evidently, we are stranded on this earth (for the time being at least), so we will have to seriously rethink our anthropological deficits, narrow agendas and selective commitments.

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