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The British Nationalist Right and the Gendering of Anti-migration Politics

Nicola Montagna

Introduction

Migration has increasingly become a major political cleavage and a divisive issue in the UK. In particular, since the second half of the 2000s, it is one of the most important themes for voters and a mobilizing factor of electoral campaigns, including the Brexit referendum. This phenomenon is not new. Political concerns and electoral calculations have influenced several migration acts,[1] and there have been movements that exploited fears about immigration in the past.[2] What *is* new is the coincidence of a number of contextual processes. First, several years of mass and, to some

[1] The 1962 act restricting entry from Commonwealth countries was passed following concerns from the Home Office that unrestricted migration would lead to social unrest. Anti-migration feeling led the Labour government in 1964 to introduce stricter immigration rules, which were consolidated in the 1968 and 1971 Immigration Acts. The new conservative era was also marked by the increasing importance of migration in the political debate, with immigration and asylum being issues in the 1992 national and 1994 European elections (Spencer 2011).

[2] The British Brothers' League, active in East London in the early years of the twentieth century, is one of the most prominent examples of anti-migrant movements organized in the UK.

N. Montagna (✉)
School of Law, Middlesex University, London, UK

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extent, unexpected migration, has changed the demography of the country with a dramatic increase in the foreign-born population. In this mutated context, recent migration is perceived as a "threat" by large portions of British society who perform menial and unskilled jobs, have few educational qualifications, and feel they are not represented by traditional parties (Wodak 2015). Second, it is taking place in a context of growing scepticism about multicultural policies and attempts to accommodate different ethnic groups on the basis of mutual recognition. According to some, including influential figures on the left, the multicultural model has failed, as the frequent conflicts involving ethnic and religious minorities demonstrate, and is no longer able to deal with growing migration flows (Goodhart 2013). Criticism of multiculturalism is often associated with the sustainability of migration either in terms of integration into the British system of values or in terms of the number of migrants putting pressure on the welfare system.

Third, anti-migrant feelings are often paralleled by hostility towards the EU, which is blamed for its free mobility regime and its effects on the UK. The EU is the catalyst for complaints concerning unrestricted immigration, welfare that privileges foreign nationals against UK citizens, the decline in sovereignty, and the perceived loss of control over the country's borders. In this respect, Brexit brought together and interpreted these two intersecting dimensions, showing how anti-European nationalism is linked to hostility to migrants. Fourthly, while past politicization was fundamentally managed between the two main parties, the Conservatives and Labour, the current debate has led to the growth of a nationalist right that is disputing this bipolar system. The nationalist right has now become a key player in the British political landscape and, even if its electoral results are still poor and its membership limited in number, it is heavily influencing the country's agenda, and its opposition to migration is a key element in its success (Ford and Goodwin 2014).

By focusing on female activists in movements of the nationalist right, this chapter examines how such women frame migration and turn it into a political issue. In particular, it looks at four dimensions: the perception of migration in terms of "mass migration", and the associated threat to national identity; the pressure on the welfare system; the impact of migrants on the labour market; and migration in relation to the EU. These

dimensions are examined with an emphasis on the gender perspective, that is, on the ways nationalist women activists assess the implications of migration for women in these areas.

The chapter draws on 36 in-depth semi-structured interviews with female activists from the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), the British National Party (BNP), and the English Defence League (EDL) and on observational ethnographic work associated with attendance at three EDL rallies (Tower Hamlets, Slough, and Peterborough).[3] Although there are significant differences between the support bases of these three organizations, the socio-economic background of participants was mainly lower and working class. Only four out of 36 had a degree and two more had an A-level; 25 per cent were homeowners, a percentage that is significantly below the national average, while occupations were mainly secretarial, supervisory, and caring. In terms of age, the bulk of the interviewees (58%) were between 40 and 60, while the rest were equally divided between those below and above this age range. The participants' social composition mirrors what Ford and Goodwin (2014) define as "the left behind", identifying both those who are in a weaker position in the labour market and with respect to globalization processes and who have been forgotten by left-wing and former working-class parties. They are the most exposed to migrant competition in the labour market and feel that foreign nationals are illegitimate beneficiaries of resources and welfare provision that should belong to the natives, therefore anti-migration politics are more attractive to them. Contrary to what is a common belief, women in nationalist parties perceive these organizations as an opportunity for them to participate in politics and to have their rights represented again. In a context where women's rights are framed as under threat by a growing presence of migrants, perceived as mostly coming from Muslim countries or with a Muslim background, the nationalist right is seen as a

[3] The interviews were part of the research project *Women in nationalist movements in the UK*, funded by the British Academy/Leverhulme, aiming to explore the nature and quality of women's support for the nationalist right in the UK, comparing women supporters of three variably positioned representatives of the nationalist right, which were the main groups in the UK at the time of the project: the United Kingdom Independence Party, the British National Party, and the English Defence League. The project was carried out by a research team based in the Department of Criminology and Sociology, School of Law, Middlesex University, London, that involved Dr. Jon Mulholland, Dr. Nicola Montagna, and Dr. Erin Sanders-McDonagh.

new chance to preserve the social and political position they have conquered in Western societies (for more details on the methodology, see Mulholland—this volume).

The three organizations from which our participants were recruited share in common an opposition to mass immigration, where the latter is often pictured as a chaotic and uncontrolled invasion. There are differences however in how the three organizations frame immigration. While the anti-immigration politics of the BNP relies on the biological racism of traditional fascism, UKIP's anti-immigration stance is associated with their rejection of the European Union project and its implications for the sovereignty of the UK. It is populist in the very sense of the term. Opposition to migration is linked to an opposition to the political elite, represented by both the big business and the EU. Finally, the EDL's anti-immigration stance appears more orientated towards the protection of national culture and values. Migration as a whole is conflated with Muslim immigration, with Islamophobia and xenophobia often overlapping in their discourse. Britain is thought of as a community of value that is undermined by the arrival of migrants whose values coincide with Islam.[4] During the interviews, migration was a recurrent theme, and a source of concern for most of the participants, although these differences among the activists of the three groups did not emerge clearly. Migration was often linked to issues of Europe and the EU, women's rights, national identity, and the threat migrants pose to the welfare state and services relating to women's needs.

To investigate female nationalists' views on migration, this chapter is divided into two parts. The first explores the gendering of the parties of the nationalist right and the role played by migration issues. The second is based on the data from the fieldwork and is subdivided into four sections which examine perceptions of the impact of migratory flows on the country, the labour market, the welfare state, and how migration is perceived in relation to the EU. The chapter will show that migration is more than a general issue and that female activists of nationalist groups find in the anti-migrant agenda an answer to their concerns as women.

[4] See, for example, the "12 questions and answers" on migration on the EDL official website: http://www.englishdefenceleague.org.uk/12-questions-and-answers/ (accessed on 25 September 2017).

Women in Nationalist Parties and the Migration Issue

The role of women in the nationalist right and nationalist movements generally is growing across Europe, contradicting the electoral and membership trends that still show a "gap" between men and women in size of participation and number of votes for the nationalist right (Immerzeel et al. 2015). In France, Marine Le Pen has not only become leader of the party and candidate in the presidential elections, but she has renewed the party's agenda, making it more appealing to larger constituencies and seriously challenging the mainstream parties the leadership of the country. In Italy, some female leaders have become key figures of the nationalist right, while in Germany, Frauke Petry, the leader of Alternative für Deutschland, has made the nationalist right a serious contender in the national elections after decades of marginality. Although nothing similar has happened yet in the UK, there are signs of change. Among the fragmented and, so far, electoral minoritarian nationalist spectrum, UKIP is possibly the party in which women could be said to have risen to key roles, with Diane James, who won an overwhelming victory in the leadership race *in September 2016. Her resignation a couple of weeks after, citing a lack of "sufficient authority" in the party, shows that* it is, however, too early to say if these signs represent significant change.

While the paternalist and misogynistic character of nationalist parties and movements may put off women (Ford and Goodwin 2014) and explain the gender gap in members and votes, the growing importance of gender issues in the domain of immigration and integration policies may be a key to understanding their increasing interest and roles in them. (Akkerman 2015). Research has shown that nationalist parties and movements across Europe owe much of their support to harsh anti-migration positions (Mammone et al. 2012; Mammone et al. 2013; von Mering and McCarty 2013) and "immigration scepticism (i.e. wanting to reduce immigration) is among the principal factors for predicting who will vote for a radical right wing party" (Rydgren 2008). In the UK, support for nationalist movements is driven by the concern that mass migration is a threat to the nation and native groups and, therefore, that control over

borders should be reinstated more firmly. Although there are differences between parties and their positions may vary according to the circumstances, migration is used as a catch-all explanation for unacceptable and rapid social change that leaves many people behind and as a symbol of the failure of the traditional parties and the liberal elite to govern the country (Malik 2014).

In relation to gender issues, two main areas may play a role in women's consent to nationalist movements. First, women who participate in nationalist politics see these movements as a trench in the "clash of civilizations" between the Christian West and Islam, with which migrants are often associated (for a more in-depth analysis of the reasons behind this framing, see Mulholland—this volume). Adherence to nationalist politics, therefore, is partly a defence of women's rights; the relatively emancipated condition of women in the West is counterposed to the lack of rights and freedoms in the countries where most foreigners are believed to be coming from. Since women are framed as the major victims of Islam, opposition to migration becomes a way to stop what the participants call the "Islamization" of the West and the threat that Muslim migration represents to their rights and security. The rights that women enjoy in Western societies are not only the clearest sign of the irreconcilable difference between Western civilization and Islam, they are also the main reason to oppose migration. In this sense, the engagement of female activists in nationalist organizations may be perceived as empowering and emancipatory—not so much from Western patriarchy, as was the case in the past (see Blee 1996), as from the world of migrants' culture that they regard as narrow and hostile towards women (Farris 2017).

Second, the roots of women's participation in nationalist politics are in their socio-economic background. They see these movements as a defence against the challenge that migrants pose over welfare provision and the labour market in both state and private sectors. Migration is generally framed as a source of economic competition, a pressure on social services and the functioning of the welfare state. In a context of economic crisis and austerity, women are among the most vulnerable and are those who suffer most from the restructuring of welfare resulting from recent government policies. As has been noted (Gillies 2013: 106), "Women make up the largest proportion of the public sector workforce and as a

consequence have been most vulnerable to cost cutting redundancies. At the same time, reduced childcare subsidies and changes to tax credit benefits are forcing working mothers on low incomes back into the home". By diverting responsibility for the withdrawal of state services and resources for parents and children from public spending cuts to migrants, the nationalist right and its anti-globalization politics are seen as defending the welfare state from the threat of migration. In this sense, a politics of "welfare chauvinism" that supports the welfare state for native citizens but rejects open immigration policies and the ready access to social programmes for foreigners (Banting 2000) may become a mobilizing factor and appeal to female voters.

These positions on migration form much of the nationalist narrative and are likely the main drivers of women's support. The following sections will mainly focus on the second dimension by exploring how the participants in the project perceive migrants as a threat to the "nation" and as competitors in the labour market and for welfare provision.

Women and Migration: Several Sources of Concern; "they arrive in thousands"

For the female activists who participated in the project, regardless of their affiliation, the size of current migratory flows is an increasingly important concern. They compare migration with either natural cataclysms, through metaphors such as flood and swamp (Allen and Blinder 2013), or with military operations. Migration is represented as an "invasion" of people who "are infiltrating our country" and "taking us over". When the focus shifts to numbers, these are never supported by clear figures. Rather, people who migrate are "too many", "arrive in thousands", and "overcrowd" the UK in "huge influxes". Not only have these "high numbers" been changing the demography of the country, they have also transformed its urban landscape and therefore its identity. The main threat comes from Muslims and Eastern Europeans:

> I think most of the Muslims in the west of Europe are immigrants. There are a lot of Somalians [sic], a lot of Pakistanis. In Germany they have

> Turkish Muslims. Why do they move here? Because they're trying to take over the world? It's just Nazism all over again. (EDL 21)

> You're over-run with the Poles and they've opened Polish shops in the town and they speak in Polish and they've got Polish shops and you're thinking, 'Hang on, this was a beautiful, historic English border town. What's happening?', you know. That's what it's about. It's just too much taking our identity away because there's too many. (UKIP 29)

However, as is the case in other European countries, migrants are not all racialized in the same way by the UK's nationalist female activists (Copsey 2010; della Porta et al. 2012; Mayer 2013). While those from Eastern Europe are seen as competing for welfare benefits, jobs, and other redistributive resources, Muslim migration is perceived as a threat to women's rights and more generally to national identity (on this point, see Mulholland—this volume). Concerns about being "pushed out", and becoming a cultural minority, as well as feelings of estrangement and being foreign in their own country, are equally widespread among the participants across the three groups:

> …that's not right, not to the loss of our identity and it's slowly being stripped away (…) Let them come here, let them feel comfortable but don't you dare take away my identity just to make an immigrant feel comfortable. I'm sorry I just don't want that. (UKIP 12)

> It's like you're permanently on holiday, like you've gone abroad and when you're abroad you're the only English-speaking person and everybody else is talking a foreign language. But you expect that because you're abroad but you don't expect it when you're at home and nobody is speaking English. (UKIP 19)

Migration is only accepted if it contributes to the British economy in the respect of the national identity and the traditions of the country. In the words of this UKIP member, cultural defence and the preservation of social stability become conflated:

> This is what I know, we can't take everybody, we're full (…) Migrants are only welcome, in my opinion, if they are going to add something to the

> country. If they are going to live by our laws, by our standards, and not object to our traditions which are our Christian beliefs or our, you know, traditions that have gone on in this country for hundreds of years. 'If you're going to come in and complain about them, then go away. (UKIP 30)

"They seem to have taken over the jobs, houses…"

Research across Europe has also shown that nationalist parties are mostly supported by voters who are more likely to be confronted by competition from immigrants over public services and other scarce resources such as houses, jobs, and welfare benefits (Koopmans et al. 2005; Rydgren 2007). They are often white, poorly educated, and unskilled workers who occupy similar segments of the labour market and compete for the same jobs as most migrant groups. These voters are in a weaker position in the labour market and share the same type of public services and resources—for example, in the health and education sectors. They therefore feel the competition from foreign workers more keenly and are correspondingly more sensitive to migration than other social strata (Bulli and Tronconi 2012). In the next two sections, I will focus on how the participants perceive the threat of migrants in the labour market and welfare system. As is happening in the urban context where, according to the participants, the opening of new Eastern European shops have been dramatically changing the cityscape of British towns, the labour market is also seen as being progressively taken over by Eastern European migrant workers. The competition is particularly felt in the labour-intensive, low-paid, and gendered employment sectors such as hospitality and care:

> I mean, where I am now it's all, mostly, hospitality positions, jobs, you know; people in hotels and breakfast, it's all that sort of thing out here. And I'd say nine out of ten of the staff are now Polish and yet they work hard, you know, and they talk to you and they keep themselves clean and they're alright, fine. But they have taken the jobs that the young out here should have because there's nothing else for them out here. (UKIP 12)

> I was working in a hotel at the time, not front of house, I was doing laundry and things like that and we had a Polish girl came to work and because

> she was willing to work all the hours God sends, we got our hours cut. She was taking over the work. Out in Poland, apparently, she was a medical secretary. She didn't have the right qualifications to do that job here. Here she just carried on cleaning or whatever – and because of the subsidy that the hotel was getting to employ her – and I just thought 'this is wrong'. (BNP 3)

When female activists communicate their concerns about work, they assume a gender perspective and look at the impact migration has on women, particularly in their roles as mothers or grandmothers. They express a maternalistic point of view, and their fears over migrant competition, whereas real or imaginary, are often related to their children and grandchildren: "I want my kids to have a future in a job like I used to walk into a job" (BNP 24), and "This is the future of my kids, really. As we live now, it's hard to get into a job and the way I'm feeling, it's getting overcrowded" (UKIP 10).

The negative impacts of immigration on the labour market include earnings. Participants in this project reiterate the widespread belief that migration drives down wages, particularly for less-skilled workers. What seems to be unfair competition may well bring social tensions and eventually conflict between natives and foreign nationals:

> Well, at the moment they all get on fine but I think once it gets, it gets too many, I think there'll probably be resentment, you know, because the Polish will probably will take the jobs that the English people feel that they should be being paid more for, you know, because that's what it's all about isn't it […] it'll get worse, won't it?, you know, because the wages'll go down and down because people are prepared to work for less so it's not going to improve is it? So I think everybody's going to get less and less. (UKIP 29)

Hostility to unskilled migrants is paradoxically reinforced by a more open and flexible approach to other forms of migration, notably where there is a shortage of skills in the upper end of the labour market:

> I mean, fair enough, if we've got a shortage in, you know, say, doctors or something, fine, let them few people come through, that's fine. I don't have an issue with that. But stop the floodgates. (BNP 17)

> "So that if we have a shortage of doctors then, yes, people coming in who want to be a doctor in this country, fine. Give them the clearance to come in. But if they're coming in and they have no job to go to, then sorry you stay out." (UKIP 30)

As we can see, feelings towards migrants vary according to the position that migrant workers have in the labour market. Whereas unskilled British workers and migrants compete in the same segment of the labour market, with an impact on job opportunities and wages, skilled migration is seen favourably, particularly in sectors such as health assistance—a safety net and traditional source of pride and identity for working-class people and the British in general, as clearly showed by our participants.

"But they don't spend their money over here": Migration, Sustainability, and Welfare Chauvinism

Another area of concern for our participants across the three groups is welfare provision and the negative impact that mass migration may have on its functioning. This research identifies three main sensitive issues for female nationalist activists. First, migrants are frequently seen as people who "abuse" the British welfare state, resulting in fewer state-subsidized services for natives. Although this complaint involves different areas of service provision, it is probably in the healthcare sector that our participants most feel the pressure. In the participants' rhetoric, migrants "take advantage of the health service" (BNP 3) and move to the UK because "their countries aren't like England; they don't get benefits, they don't get health benefits – they have to pay for it". (BNP 7). This is the "benefit-scrounger" rhetoric, which is very similar to the tabloid portrayal of migrants as the undeserving recipients of welfare benefits and which reinforces another widespread narrative, that of the Briton as victim:

> Yes, because I think Labour and Conservatives have let too many immigrants in the country and I think the English people are suffering, schools and hospitals and, you know, benefits – they're paying a lot more benefits out – and I think that's ruined the country. (BNP 6)

Second, participants emphasize the issue of the welfare state's sustainability. Migrants arrive in Britain in great quantities, attracted by the welfare system, and grow numerically much faster than the British:

> The majority have only had 2.4 children because they want to keep the population of the country down and the resources, you know, look after the resources. And then this lot are coming in and having ten kids and more, eight wives, you know. (UKIP 29)

The pace of migrants' numerical growth is not sustainable and threatens the welfare state. These feelings are often gendered and it is often perceived pressure from foreign nationals on maternity or women's healthcare services that raises most concern:

> (…) the NHS is being overworked. The maternity services, they're being, well, they're being exhausted because of this, you know. There's far too many people in England, well, shall we say Derby. Most of the women who come to Derby or who are in my area in maternity services, I'd say six out of ten of those are non-British nationals. (BNP 7)

The view that the pressure migrants place on the system is unsustainable is reinforced by the distorted feeling that, unlike elderly people (the British pensioners) who retire and live abroad and who put their savings "into the system and keeping the local businesses going" (UKIP 19), the migrants who live and work in the UK "are not giving a lump sum to the country, they're coming to make money in the country they've chosen to live in" (UKIP 19).

Migrants are, therefore, portrayed as a cost to British welfare while their economic contribution either as workers and tax-payers or as consumers goes unacknowledged. Even when migrants are welcomed as hard workers with genuine intentions, and not regarded as wanting to live on benefits and take advantage of the generosity of the British welfare system, their contribution to the country's economy is disputed by our participants. Migrant workers may bring some benefits to the country's economy, but overall they still "screw it" or "put a burden" on it, in expressions widely used by nationalist activists:

> You know the problems with education, with jobs, with housing, with the NHS, all of those things are made worse by mass immigration. The more people that come into this country, the more of a burden there's going to be on the resources that supply all of those things, you know. (UKIP 10)

Third, the participants express what has been defined as "welfare chauvinism" (Kitschelt 1995: 22). They regard the welfare state as an exclusive system of social protection for natives against migrants who do not belong to the British community and whose presence endangers the welfare of the national in-group. Therefore, the allocation of public spending and its beneficiaries becomes another field of conflict between competing interests that widens the crack between "us" and "them", between the ethnically homogeneous natives and all the "others". Participants turn Gordon Brown's phrase: "*British jobs* for *British* workers" into the claim, "British welfare for British people".

> If you read the newspapers today, there's an elderly lady in Swaffham who's lost her doctor because the doctor is no longer able to (quote) 'cope with the number of immigrants' and they are having to sign up on the books. So you can see why they have a problem. And so the position is not anti-immigrant. It is controlled immigration, immigration that can be absorbed and the various support services can tolerate. (UKIP 32)

"Britain, to be honest, has become Europe's dumping ground"

Anti-EU feelings are widespread among nationalist parties that see the EU as a supra-national Leviathan that rules over the nation-states and represents a threat to national sovereignty. As research has repeatedly shown (Giovannini 2015), the anti-EU stance is common to all nationalist right movements across Europe, and constitutes a significant part of its popularity, particularly among the lower strata of society. Even among the participants to this project, hostility to the EU figures high in their agenda and hostility to the EU and migration are understood as two faces of the same coin. The EU serves as an overarching and integrating motif that effectively brings together multiple other but related political themes.

The European question, and migration, often become conflated, particularly where migration comes from Eastern European countries:

> I have two issues. One is Europe and the other is mass immigration, the Open Door policy that this country has because of Europe and I am quite worried about Eastern Europe, about the amount of people coming in from Eastern Europe. (UKIP 5)

Similar to migration, the EU threatens the country's identity, and what some participants see as British distinctiveness. One of the most frequently expressed anxieties is that through EU membership, Britain will lose its distinctiveness and become merely one part of a broader European identity:

> I understand. I don't want to join the Euro, I don't want to lose the monarchy, I don't want to have an armed force of Europe. I want us to keep our armed forces, our monarchy and our currency. I don't want to be ruled by Brussels. That is the end line for me. (UKIP 27)

For others, hostility to Europe is more practical and has to do with the daily life effects of being part of the Union, particularly with regard to migration. Being part of the EU is often associated with a lack of control over the UK's borders. The government is framed as powerless against the EU, unable to either control who enters the country, or to deport undesired people (e.g. suspected terrorists and undocumented migrants):

> And people say we're being racist. We're not, we're trying to manage our borders by doing that but unfortunately the EU says we can't manage our own borders. They say we have to let everyone in, even if they're the poorest people in the world and they're going to be coming to live on our welfare. (UKIP 5)

Across the three groups, our participants commonly linked uncontrolled migration, and access to the welfare system, to the UK's obligations regarding freedom of circulation and border policy within the EU. If migrants exploit the generosity of the British system, and the

British people are victimized by foreign nationals, this is because of the agreements the UK has with the EU:

> Well, I just think Britain, to be honest, has become Europe's dumping ground. That's my view. It's now Europe's dumping ground. None of the other… You know, France won't tolerate it, Belgium doesn't tolerate it, you know, and they all flood here because of the benefit state and, you know, even if they're not claiming, you know, benefits and they are actually working, they're still getting health care, you know, so they're still getting something out of us. (BNP 17)

> Yes, I do, yes. I mean, I think the general consensus is being part of the EU a lot of people that don't live here – yes, I understand the free movement between the EU, I understand that but a lot of them come here thinking, you know, 'basically we can go over there and we can get free benefits'. (EDL 18)

The combination of mass immigration, and the UK's membership of the EU, was seen to impact significantly on the NHS, and we have already noted how central the NHS is to nationalist activists' concerns. The NHS is a distinctive institution for generations of British people. Although it is still working and providing excellent services in the view of our participants, the pressure from the EU, either coming from migrants or the demands from Brussels, is putting its functioning and existence under risk:

> [The NHS] is still a great organization and to see it misused because of Europe, you know, because if you're spending millions of pounds on people who have not paid into it then it's other parts of the NHS are going to be compromised and that bothers me, morally. (UKIP 5)

In the narratives of our participants, the diverse themes reviewed in this chapter intersect and mutually reinforce. Migrants arrive *en masse* to take advantage of the generosity of the welfare state, and to the point that the system that was established for the benefit of the British people is on the verge of collapse. Within this context, the EU serves is a catalyst for multiple complaints and resentments, uniting multiple themes under the single banner. The EU's free movement policy renders foreign nationals

and UK citizens equally entitled to enjoy the benefits of the British system. In times of economic crisis and diminished resources, however, this is problematic and difficult to accept.

Concluding Remarks: Gendering Hostility to Migration

This chapter has shown how migration and migrants are a contentious issue for nationalist female activists. In particular, it has focused on the perception of migratory flows and their size and the consequences these have on the identity of the country, on the labour market, and on the welfare system. These areas of concern for female activists show the ways in which migration is a major issue that explains their participation in nationalist parties. Is there a gender dimension in these views? Is there a specifically female perspective? Although our project investigated the views of female activists without comparison to male activists, this chapter has shown that migration is more than a general issue. Rather, it is often framed within a gender perspective, and female activists find in the anti-migrant agenda an answer to their concerns as women. When nationalist female activists refer to migration, they assume a gendered point of view. Their concern for what they perceive as mass migration is over the consequences that this may have on women's rights and on women's ability to access welfare provisions as in the past, before the Labour and the Conservative party "opened the floodgates for millions of immigrants" (BNP 17). When it comes to work, they assume the role of mothers and grandmothers and of female workers who work in labour-intensive, low-paid and gendered sectors, such as hospitality and care, in which there is competition from migrant workers, particularly from Eastern Europe. Similarly, their hostility to migration is justified with regard to the state of the welfare system and its sustainability in the face of growing pressure from migrants—particularly with regard to gendered provisions such as maternity services. Gender issues may, therefore, be a further potential cleavage in nationalist politics, and a more targeted agenda may attract more female support than is currently the case and narrow the gender gap

between men and women's electoral support for nationalist parties. Similarly, how female nationalist activists perceive the migration threat to welfare provisions and labour market may be an area which needs to be further investigated.

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