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A Specter of Nationalism

ON A WARM FRIDAY NIGHT in late May, I approached the dimly lit entrance to a bar in the revamped grounds of a former German Democratic Republic (GDR) factory. My ears were still ringing from the deafening heavy metal blasted on our way there by my young chaperones: Freddi, a thin and tall young man who was completing vocational training in storage logistics; Keppler, a veritable Goliath, soon to enter prison for the brutal vigilante torture of several alleged "child molesters"; and Felix, who grumbled incessantly about immigrants, their excessive numbers, their abuse of the welfare system, their delinquent proclivities, and their intolerable cultural habits.[1] For me, the anthropologist, the small courtyard in front of U-21—the bar was named after a WWII German submarine—gathered much more than merely a fair portion of the young people with whom I conducted research, some of whom we shall encounter time and again in the pages that follow.

Evident were lingering memories of the GDR and of reunification, even among those too young to have meaningfully experienced either, like Norman, a scruffy, chubby twenty-year-old, who stepped over and implored that I lend him money for beers, a "DDR" hat covering his balding top.[2] Or Sylvia, who came to remind me of our planned excursion the following morning to the season's final game of the local soccer club, a bastion of eastern pride. Unmistakable, too, were the inexorable traces of the Third Reich and the dramatic metamorphoses in recent years of how it has been remembered. A handful of people in the small crowd sported T-shirts with the inscription "May 8—Liberation Day? We're not celebrating!" (8. Mai—Befreiungstag? Wir feiern nicht!). Souvenirs from a right-wing extremist demonstration on the sixtieth anniversary of the Reich's capitulation, the shirts referenced the contemporary recasting in mainstream national discourses of Germany's defeat at the hand of the Allies as its emancipation. Lisa and Elsa, respectively, a skingirl and a neo-pagan aficionado of Nordic

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[1] The names of informants throughout the book have been changed to maintain anonymity.
[2] Deutsche Demokratische Republik, German for GDR.

myths and Gothic fashions, joined me on the curb for a chat. Their garments and accoutrements evoked a whole universe of illicit signs associated with National Socialism. Their physical appearance at once challenged and conformed to the legal apparatuses, penal regimes, and cultural taboos that police the use of such signs in Germany. It is these mechanisms, we shall see, that are charged with quarantining the dangerous potentialities of emergent national imaginaries in the reunited Berlin Republic.

At the same time, the young people in front of the bar signaled in a number of ways the end of the postwar era. In that sense they suggested as well how the return of the national question in Germany (see Huyssen 1991; Geyer 1997; Jarausch 2006) has in fact been embedded within historical processes that have reverberated far beyond the country's borders. Later that night at U-21, eighteen-year-old Robert drew near, raving about the right-wing extremist NPD (Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands [National Democratic Party of Germany]).[3] He advocated for the NPD, claiming that the party eschewed racism and objected instead only to the hordes of slothful immigrants who arrived to exploit the German state. Like his friend Felix before him, Robert also voiced anti-immigration idioms that have become prevalent throughout Europe, shaping political visions and projects not only on the far right fringes but, indeed, across the political terrain. His statements reproduced continent-wide, ethnically inflected, social Darwinist fantasies whose rhetoric—and praxis—has railed against "parasitical foreigners." He reiterated a series of xenophobic anxieties about emergent multiethnic cityscapes. His words signaled the (sometimes brutal) ways in which, from London's East End to Hungary's hinterlands and from Malmö to Athens, young European nationalists have grounded abstract global processes in the concrete physicality of foreign bodies (see Modood and Werbner 1997; Holmes 2000; Pred 2000). Listening to him, it was difficult for me not to recall certain scholarly writings on the shifting orientation of political investments in recent decades. I was particularly reminded of arguments about how social antagonisms have increasingly come to be framed as cultural differences rather than as class conflicts. One effect of these processes, in this view, has been the culturalization of racism and the ethnicization of politics in numerous world regions today (see Alonso 1994; Tambiah 1996; Žižek 1997; Pred 2000; Shoshan 2008b; Brown 2009; Markell 2009).

In turn, virtually all my acquaintances among the few dozen young people at U-21 depended in some form or another on the state for their subsistence. Few among them could harbor realistic aspirations for significant betterment to their material circumstances. As importantly, most received their remittances through various government-sponsored third-sector vocational training or mandatory welfare-for-work programs. In the words of Nikolas Rose (2000a), such strate-

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[3]The NPD is the oldest party on the German extreme right. It has been the most prominent extreme right party in recent decades.

gies of governance seek to activate and "responsibilize" citizens through participatory schemes. In this, too, the fate of my young informants bespeaks the links between contemporary reconfigurations of political imaginaries on the one hand and, on the other hand, shifting and uneven processes of neoliberalization that have redefined modes of production and consumption, as well as the relations between states, nations, and citizens (see Soja 1989; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Povinelli 2000; Harvey 2001; Postone 2006; Wacquant 2007).

This book takes as its point of departure the daily realities of young right-wing extremist groups in an East Berlin district in order to think through their salient place within a post-reunification project of German nationhood. The demise of the postwar order has spelled the return of the nation to the center of the political terrain in Germany as both a question and an imperative. This so-called rebirth of history provoked and still provokes severe anxieties. The traumatic legacy of the National Socialist past has loomed forebodingly over the country's imagination of its future, now compounded by what has been increasingly framed as its junior intimate, the memory of the epoch of the GDR. There is a certain disturbing irony in the fact that this historical rebirth has involved both the reemergence of a unified, democratic, liberal state and the resurgence of its doppelgänger in the figure of authoritarian, nationalist, violent currents. Young right-wing extremists have been vital for domesticating the tension between these historical horizons on the one hand and the urgencies of the historical moment on the other—albeit always nervously and tentatively.

The chapters that follow tell the story of this Sisyphean labor of domestication. They describe the immense energies expended on drawing and policing the boundaries of legitimate politics in Germany. Throughout this book we shall see how, in negotiating the project of a rehabilitated German nationhood, this labor grounds the very specters that it struggles so strenuously to exclude at its very core and betrays its own inevitable incompleteness. However, as I hinted above, the troubled enterprise of present-day Germany's national question proceeds under the sign of broader contemporary processes. Across the European continent, the policing of shifting political frontiers fuses today with the governance of emergent social peripheries. The waning of Fordist-era regimes of production, consumption, and accumulation has precipitated new configurations of social marginalization throughout the (de)industrialized world (Mingione 1996; Friedman 2003b; Hannemann 2005; Wacquant 2007). At the same time, it has also undermined certain forms of political struggle structured around nationally territorialized class antagonisms (Harvey 2001). The political ramifications of these historical shifts for the superfluous residues of an industrial European working class—with which the figures outside the bar that Friday night could certainly be counted—have been far-reaching. They have proceeded hand in hand with processes of neoliberalization that have redefined citizenship and set in motion novel modes of governing populations—especially at the bottom

end of widening social polarization. The management of affect, and, in Europe in particular, what I call in this book "the management of hate," has been key to these new forms of control. This book is an ethnographic study of the sobering implications of these developments for the shape of political imaginaries today.

Understanding the political work that young right-wing extremists perform demands attention to how these seemingly disparate historical trajectories and social processes are articulated in present-day Germany. Accordingly, the purview of this study oscillates between and interweaves several scales of analysis, from the quotidian humdrum of right-wing extremist youths on the streets of East Berlin or the vernacular voices that negotiate cultural impasses in situated interactions to the hegemonic projects of a post-reunification nationalism or globally circulating idioms of politics and identity. Departing from certain scholarly approaches to the study of nationalist and ethnic conflict, my emphasis will not be on the disruptive influence of external forces on seemingly authentic local contexts, an approach that provides little insight into the contemporary extreme right in Germany. Their atavistic claims and their obsessions with purity and authenticity notwithstanding, my informants must be understood—as they too ultimately understand themselves—as internal to the historical moment and to the large-scale processes that define it. My interest is not to paint them as incommensurably other or as politically exotic species but rather as constitutively integral to the logic of the contemporary.[4]

TAMING THE DEMONS

Today, the concept of right-wing extremism (*Rechtsextremismus*) is fundamental to how most Germans imagine the political terrain. It is central, too, to how the German state sees and produces knowledge about its presumed internal adversaries. But this was not always so. In postwar Germany, the commonplace distinction between a legitimate, democratic political space and its illicit, antidemocratic margins was drawn with the concepts of center (*Mitte*) and radicalism (*Radikalismus*). Much like extremism today, radicalism used to mark political fields—whether on the right (*Rechtsradikalismus*) or on the left (*Linksradikalismus*)—as external to the spectrum of tolerated difference and as hostile to liberal democracy. Only toward the mid-1970s did the category of extremism (*Extremismus*) gradually gain currency in public and official state discourse, and especially in the terminology of the Federal Office for the Pro-

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[4]My argument here is in agreement with Horkheimer and Adorno's classical insistence on the modernity of fascism, and their rejection of its interpretation as primordial or as oppositional to the Enlightenment. Of course, such a take on insidious and at times violent forms of nationalism rings far less comforting than their displacement to otherwheres and otherwhens (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002 [1944]).

tection of the Constitution (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, henceforth BfV) (Butterwegge and Meier 2002, 18–19). Rather than simply substituting the concept of radicalism, the newly introduced category of extremism displaced it toward the political center. Radicalism gradually came to denote not the excluded extreme but rather that which, while represented as far from the mainstream, was not perceived to threaten the liberal-democratic order. The political terrain thus underwent what linguistic anthropologists would call a process of semiotic differentiation or fractal recursion.[5] Put differently, the borderland of ambiguity that separated the mainstream from the excluded—in the words of Chantal Mouffe, adversary from enemy[6]—has been baptized as a category of its own. The introduction of the category of extremism therefore sought to tame the ambiguity of the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate politics by naming it as an objective term within the universe of political possibilities. This attempt, at once hopeless and irresistible, already hinted at a nervous discomfort about the inherent tenuousness of the distinction itself.

Such a rendering of the political spectrum, to be sure, is not unique to German society. And yet its German variation is distinctive in a number of respects. Most important, it corresponds to a dominant historical narrative of the collapse of the Weimar Republic, Germany's first liberal-democratic experiment, as resulting from its helplessness against both communism and fascism. But it reflects, as well, the preeminence of the theory of totalitarianism in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). In insisting on the similarities between fascism and communism, the theory of totalitarianism effectively reduced so-called political extremisms to their nonidentity with a presumed mainstream. In the postwar years, this rendering answered the need to generate political and historical distance between West Germany and its two primary others: its National Socialist predecessor and its state socialist contemporary (Arendt 1973; Borneman 1993; Müller 1997; Butterwegge and Meier 2002; Hell 2006; Jarausch 2006; Rabinbach 2006).

Experts broadly agree that the category of right-wing extremism is used inconsistently to denote quite heterogeneous phenomena. Stabs at formulating precise definitions commonly outline more or less similar clusters of key attributes: nationalist sentiments, authoritarian personality structures, orientation

[5]The process of fractal recursion refers to the reappearance of semiotic contrasts at different scales. Thus, for example, the East/West division of Europe repeats itself within the Federal Republic of Germany, and again within the urban geography of Berlin. In the case at hand, a previous distinction between mainstream and radicalism reappears as two new distinctions, between mainstream and radicalism on the one hand and between radicalism and extremism on the other. See Irvine and Gal (2000).

[6]Chantal Mouffe has described an adversary as "a legitimate enemy, one with whom we have some common ground because we have a shared adhesion to the ethico-political principles of liberal democracy: liberty and equality." A real enemy, in contrast, is a political element with whom a democratic resolution of conflict is impossible (2000b, 102).

to violence, racism and xenophobia, misogyny and rigid conceptions of gender, attachment to National Socialist ideology, or belief in fundamental inequalities between humans (see, e.g., Heitmeyer 1992; Schubarth and Stöss 2001; Butterwegge and Meier 2002). The denotational scope of the concept is as wide and diverse as the social settings and pragmatic stakes of its deployments. One revealing instance I encountered during my fieldwork occurred in the context of the center-right Christian Democratic Union's (CDU) opposition to proposed antidiscrimination legislation required by EU directives and promoted in Germany largely by the political left. A central concern of the antidiscrimination campaign consisted in protecting women and minorities from discrimination in the job market. Mind-bogglingly, a CDU politician argued that such laws would prohibit employers from excluding right-wing extremist job applicants based on their political positions.

The ubiquity of the concept in both lay and expert discourses seems as resilient as it is oblivious to widespread dissatisfaction with it, whether on analytical or political grounds. Researchers frequently question its theoretical value, citing its agglomeration of fundamentally dissimilar phenomena, its inconsistent application, and its manipulation for electoral gains. Similarly, the concept comes under fire for its ideological entailments, for collapsing right and left, and for deflecting attention from pervasive racist, sexist, and nationalist currents that pass as innocuous, legitimate opinions.[7] Yet its force becomes all the more patent precisely in the face of the difficulty of formulating alternatives to it. To mention but one illustrative example, consider the encyclopedic volume *Rechtsextremismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland—Eine Bilanz* (Right Extremism in the Federal Republic of Germany—Taking Stock) (Schubarth and Stöss 2001). While the book opens with a devastating critique of the analytical merit of the concept of extremism, nearly all its chapters use the category in both their titles and their texts.[8]

The apparent tension between the analytical weakness and discursive robustness of the category of right-wing extremism makes more sense, however, if we consider the cultural stakes that converge in it. As a political category, it

[7] During my fieldwork I have repeatedly heard such reservations, for example, from antifascist activists, educators, and staff of NGOs that work to fight racism and promote democratic values.

[8] This dilemma, however, seems somewhat weaker in critiques of the concept on political grounds. Neither on the far left nor on the far right do people seem to designate themselves as extremists, instead using more nuanced differentiations: *Antifa* (antifascist), *Antideutschen* (anti-Germans), or *Autonome* (anarchists) on the left, or *Nationalisten* (nationalists), *Rechte* (rightists), or *Deutsche* (Germans) on the right. My right-wing informants often referred to their political adversaries as left-wing extremists. In contrast, those who self-identify as radical leftists in my experience preferred to call their political enemies fascists or Nazis. Some scholars have promoted the concept of radicalism as an alternative, but, in fact, the two terms are frequently used inconsistently and interchangeably, not only in lay talk but in expert discourses as well (e.g., Grumke and Wagner 2002).

marks what Allan Pred has termed "otherwheres" (1997), or a space into which a whole range of anxieties can be projected. In this sense, it indicates what one is not. Drawing on Ernesto Laclau (1996c), we may say that, because it stands beyond the frontiers of the political community, its representation involves a measure of homogenization, just as, correlatively, it allows the representation of that community itself as more or less uniform and coherent (for example, as "democratic"). But what precisely is the nature, and function, of that exclusion? Far more vital than generating difference with respect to, say, a neo-Nazi street gang or a racist political party often of trivial electoral significance, is the constitution of distance with the historical past. In Germany, today's right-wing extremists appear as concrete incarnations of more general forms that continue to haunt the present. Yet, the relation between the extreme right and the collectivity that defines itself, as it were, against it is not a simple, external dialectic between two separate terms that constitute each other through their differences. More precisely, as a political category, right-wing extremism operates in Germany as a constitutive outside. Following Jacques Derrida, Chantal Mouffe has described the constitutive outside as "present within the inside as its always real possibility" (2000a, 21). Viewed in this light, right-wing extremism is at once incommensurable with and the condition of possibility of the collectivity, at once radically external to and fundamentally constitutive of it. It reveals, then, not so much what one is not but rather the nature of deep anxieties about the potential of becoming—or, indeed, already being contaminated by—one's nightmares; hence, the profound discomfort and angst that physical proximity to right-wing extremist "things" seems to provoke among many Germans. Of course, this unbearable intimacy has everything to do as well with the fact that, far from being reified as an "object," nationalism surfaces as a "subject" within virtually every German family in the form of ancestors. The loved ones of one's bloodline thus too often slip into the material of one's nightmares.[9]

The perpetual "return of the repressed" in such encounters produces enormous strain. It calls for institutionalized mechanisms and formulaic scripts in order to tame the anxieties that it incites, to camouflage the inherent tenuousness of political distinctions, and to restore a semblance of stability. This book explores some of the many social institutions that participate in this working through of a national neurosis. Perhaps not surprisingly, a prominent place is reserved in this enterprise precisely for repressive methods. When it comes to right-wing extremism, criminalization, censorship, state persecution, or zero-tolerance approaches are often hailed by actors who would vehemently oppose them in other contexts. Throughout the chapters that follow, we shall see how the concept of right-wing extremism remains at once radically excluded and ineradicably constitutive of German nationalism today. The incessant labor of

[9] I thank Andrea Muehlebach for this insight.

taming the cultural anxieties that it triggers and of forever policing the exclusion of an other that obstinately contaminates the inside defines the discursive and political stakes under which this concept operates in Germany.

My decision to employ the concept of right-wing extremism in this book despite its analytical shortcomings and political baggage owes to my interest in it as an ethnographic object, for all the reasons already enumerated. Rather than attempting a more precise definition, coining some less ideologically burdened neologism, or remaining faithful to the vocabulary of my informants, my aim is to elucidate the latter's fundamental place within recent transformations of the political terrain in Germany, and precisely for that reason the notion of right-wing extremism and the immense weight attached to it appear especially appropriate. Throughout this book, accordingly, I use this notion as a pervasive local category that frames my informants—who cannot but relate and respond to it in a variety of ways—and that effectively links their activities to the ambivalences that mark Germany's emergent nationhood.

THE NATIONAL REMAINS

I have mentioned that the stakes attached to policing the frontiers of the political, and accordingly to the extreme right as a category, have dramatically escalated in recent decades. And I have suggested that this intensification has been motivated by the resurgence of the national question in the wake of the postwar era. Both claims require clarification. The Cold War division of Germany, of Europe, and of broad swaths of the world at large was a postscript of sorts to World War II that long outlived it. Its unraveling, crystallized in the events of 1989, constituted the concluding words in a saga that had shaped the globe throughout the "short twentieth century" (Hobsbawm 1994). The end of the postwar geopolitical order spelled a radical reopening of history and set in motion various efforts to recover the compasses that could reorient time in the here and now. For obvious reasons, Germans have experienced these years as particularly seismic (Geyer 1997; Huyssen 2003e). They meant at once the possibility of a certain historical closure and, inseparably, the reemergence of the long-tabooed question of nationhood. A rekindled national confidence and assertiveness has been evident, for example, in the sustained campaign for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, a forum established by and for the victors of WWII; in the insistence on the expansion and intensification of the EU, reformed to reflect Germany's superior proportional power within it; in emergent discourses of self-victimization and suffering; in rising enthusiasm for military interventionism from the Balkans to Afghanistan, a sharp contrast with the formerly broad consensus against the positioning of German forces on foreign soil; or in the relocation of the federal government from its parochial home in Bonn to its mammoth quarters in Berlin.

But this nascent sense of normalcy spawned its own discontents. The Cold War suspension of history had meant as well the reassuring deferral of its peril—of the possibility of its return. If history turned open-ended, its outline was up for grabs. Freshly sovereign over its future, no longer hindered by division and occupation, Germany now had to assume the task of holding its own specters at bay. And it had to do so under the watchful gaze of the world at large, of Europe in particular, and of Germans themselves—some still profoundly skeptical of the success of externally coerced democracy in uprooting putatively pervasive fascist sympathies and hence supportive of intensified repression, others distrustful of the state's very commitment to the cause. The last two and a half decades have therefore witnessed a medley of power politics, nationalist reawakenings, and propitiatory gestures. The consolidation of a dominant political position within the EU has been accompanied by increased attendance of German leaders at WWII memorial anniversaries across the Continent. The public endorsement of narratives of displacement and exile has proceeded hand in hand with a foreign policy emphasis on reconciliation with Poland. The official sponsoring of commemorations of the victims of Allied carpet bombings has complemented an invigorated investment in the memory of the Holocaust. Finally, the intake at great financial cost of vast populations (East Germans, so-called German Russians) solely for their ethnic Germanness (*Volkszugehörigkeit*)—which surely highlighted an enduring ethnocultural nationalism—took place side by side with the liberalization of citizenship and naturalization laws dating to the Second and Third Reich eras, including the introduction of the long-rejected principle of jus soli.[10]

Such tensions between normal and perverse nationalism became palpably evident during the 2006 World Cup games. National and international media alike celebrated the broad, peaceful, and—perhaps for the first time since the war—unapologetic flag-waving German patriotism. Pundits praised the Germans as proud and patriotic yet hospitable and friendly. Many of my friends in Germany, however, viewed the mass spectacles of the federal flag with profound unease. Moreover, the retrospective tributes silenced the acute uncertainty that preceded the championship and that found its expression in fierce public debates over whether the country would deliver upon the motto selected for the games, "Die Welt zu Gast bei Freunden" (officially, "A Time to Make Friends" but roughly "The World Hosted by Friends"), or whether it would prove dangerously inhospitable. Against the background of several brutal racist assaults in the immediate run-up to the tournament, some insisted that officially warning visitors would prove wiser than feigning tranquillity. Beyond

[10] For a review of the history of German concepts of citizenship and national belonging, of their fundamental reliance on notions of culture, blood, and ethnicity, and of the long-standing resistance in Germany to considerations of territoriality and jus soli as principles of inclusion, see, for example, Preuß (2003) and Brubaker (2009).

sheer physical violence, commentators expressed concern that media images—sure to circulate the world over—would capture not only the black-yellow-red flags of the Republic, but also the black-white-red of the Reich. In a sense, the official interpellation of Germans as FRG flag-waving patriots was about the thwarting of bad nationalism through its inundation with good nationalism.

On the one hand, then, the collapse of the postwar order shook seemingly ironclad taboos to the core and released a host of demons upon the scene. The "good sides" of National Socialism or the horrors of German suffering have long found voice in the rhetoric of extreme right parties,[11] the lyrics of legally banned neo-Nazi musicians, or the chatter of intimate family conversations. Until recently, however, they rarely if ever featured in such mainstream publicity artifacts as, for example, Günter Grass's 2002 novel *Crabwalk* (*Im Krebsgang*) (2002b), a testament to the recent upheavals in taboos governing historical memory. Grass's detail-rich, harrowingly graphic narration depicts the 1945 sinking of the German ship *Wilhelm Gustloff* by a Russian submarine, in which thousands of refugees met their deaths. It amounts to a recollection of German victimhood so emphatic that, until not long ago, it would surely have placed the author himself with the radical fringes of right-wing historical revisionism. The novel reveals the multiple ways—beyond the mere loosening of taboos—in which reunification has facilitated the elaboration of such narratives. Grass's ability to preempt accusations of revisionism rests upon his skillful evocation of the uncanny landscape of the former GDR, and especially of that most clichéd chronotope of high-rise communist-era residential neighborhoods (*Plattenbauten*) as the dominion of stubborn Stalinists, nostalgic nationalists, and violent skinheads.[12]

But, on the other hand, the historical rupture demanded a revision of the national question, and of its place in history. Historians have shown that the ideological foundations of fascism had been consolidated and had become prevalent throughout Europe decades before fascist movements seized political power (Nolte 1969; Sternhell 1995 and 1996). The wedding of an organic nationalism with a revised, anti-Marxist version of socialism at the dawn of the twentieth century spawned antidemocratic, antiliberal, and anti-Enlightenment currents throughout the Continent.[13] In Germany, however, 1945 was expected (and was

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[11] Embodied, for example, in the figure of Georg Strasser and the socialist wing of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei [NSDAP]).

[12] For an excellent history of *Plattenbauten* neighborhoods in the GDR and a discussion of their post-reunification resignification as underclass urban peripheries and their emergence as a social problem in a changing historical context, see Hannemann (2005). For a more extended discussion of Günter Grass's novel *Crabwalk*, see Shoshan (2016).

[13] Ernst Nolte (1969), in a seminal study of France, Italy, and Germany, identified a spiritual turn at the end of the nineteenth century that provided the roots for a particular form of anti-Marxism in which socialism and nationalism coexisted. At its basis, according to Nolte, the fascism that developed subsequently opposed the philosophical transcendence of both Marxist socialism and European liberalism. Despite important disagreements with Nolte (e.g., about the significance of racism or the purely negative character of fascist ideology), Zeev Sternhell has also argued that

sometimes assumed) to mark the definitive end to such ideological traditions. The events of 1989 therefore posed difficult questions. Has the postwar order truly eliminated the roots of the malaise or has it merely alleviated its symptoms? Many Germans I met during my research still struggled to find answers to such questions. People who on one occasion would assess the threat from the extreme right as negligible, on another would proclaim that, in fact, little has changed and that the enduring fascist inclinations of their countrymen could boil over at any moment, especially in the grip of economic stagnation. As I prepared to leave, acquaintances who earlier professed their patriotic pride would beseech me, jokingly, "Please don't leave us alone with the Germans" (as the familiar saying goes, every joke also has a funny side to it). How Germans respond to and manage such uncertainties has carried—and will continue to carry—far-reaching implications for the country's political ambitions, especially on the European scene.

Hand in hand with transformations in discursive forms and with the historical exigency of revising nationhood, since the late 1980s the country has witnessed a surge in public preoccupation with purification from the traces of National Socialism. In the context of a state project to recover the national and render it normal once again, the rigid, compulsive hold over its perverse flights has come to define its embryonic form. In other words, the crusade against insidious, illicit nationalism, as an obscene potential that lurks within the most ordinary forms of life, has ingrained itself as the constitutive kernel of a post-reunification national project. The groups that stand at the center of this book have been vital for this enterprise. Throughout the following chapters, and in diverse sites and moments, we shall encounter the paradoxes to which it has given life.

It would be erroneous, however, to assume that a narrative of national identity had been previously absent in Germany. Numerous scholars (e.g., Habermas 1991; Borneman 1997; Huyssen 2000) have rightly insisted that, for the better part of the postwar period, the notion of a West German nationhood successfully structured itself around the tropes of material prosperity and economic competitiveness (Wohlstand Deutschland and Standort Deutschland). Skyrocketing productivity and purchasing power defined the parameters for officially endorsed expressions of patriotic pride and for the German state's own

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fascism appeared first as a cultural phenomenon. For Sternhell, the fascist synthesis of an anti-materialist revision of Marxism with what he terms "tribal nationalism" was a general European phenomenon and an integral part of the Continent's cultural history that appealed to innumerable intellectuals from across the political spectrum (1995). For a study that examines contemporary European far right nationalism within this broader history of fascism, see Holmes (2000). While my understanding of fascism is informed by this literature, in this book I place emphasis on right-wing extremism as a particular contemporary convergence of a number of historical processes that largely unfolded after the periods of the cultural consolidation of fascist ideology and of its emergence as a political force.

modes of self-legitimation and of managing the problem of its past. As late as 1979, Michel Foucault, reflecting on the postwar history of German neoliberalism, could still write:

> History had said no to the German state, but now the economy will allow it to assert itself. Continuous economic growth will take over from a malfunctioning history. It will thus be possible to live and accept the breach of history as a breach in memory, inasmuch as a new dimension of temporality will be established in Germany that will no longer be a temporality of history, but one of economic growth . . . In contemporary Germany we have what we can say is a radically economic state . . . that is to say, its root is precisely economic. (2008, 86)

Scholars have also shown how, a full decade later, Wohlstand nationalism played a key part in precipitating the swift and unconditional dissolution of the GDR. At the time, Habermas sarcastically baptized this dynamic as "a unified nation of angry DM [deutsche mark] citizens" (1991). In fact, many political dissenters in the East dreamed of a genuinely reformed and democratic socialism. But the elections that sealed the fate of the GDR were marked by fanciful promises that employed the national narrative of universal material affluence. This, even as that same narrative had already become all but obsolete, a nostalgic fantasy more than a viable futurity. Just how sour such promises—and the expectations to which they had given rise—have since turned was painfully evident in the acerbic tone with which Helmuth, one of the social workers whom I accompanied in my research, once recounted to me how a thick layer of advertising posters that a billboard in his neighborhood had accumulated over the years was scrubbed down to reveal a 1990 CDU election campaign ad that vowed, "Prosperity for all!" (Wohlstand für alle!); he shook his head disdainfully.

The end of the Cold War and its bringing of the national question into focus, then, arrived at a historical moment in which, for well over a decade, the dominant rendering of patriotic pride along economic lines had slowly been crumbling. The defunct promise of universal prosperity, tarnished since the mid-1970s by rising long-term unemployment and receding rates of economic growth, set into motion quests for other horizons of national identification.[14]

[14] Starting in the late 1970s, scholars have documented a steady decline of employment, growing wage differences, increase in working hours, weakened labor unions, rise in temporary and part-time jobs, progressive dismantling of labor protections, and a segmentation of welfare recipients. While a number of these processes were already well under way before 1989, reunification exercised a clear catalyzing impact on them. Current unemployment rates in Germany, while low compared with certain years over the past two decades and lower than many other European countries, are still very high relative to their pre-1980s levels. Income inequality, as measured by the Gini index, has been on the rise since the mid-1980s, as have relative poverty rates. Their negative consequences have disproportionately affected older cohorts, younger cohorts, women, immigrants, and residents of the former GDR territories (Knecht 1999; Mayer, Diewald, and Solga 1999; Pohl 2000; Kapphan 2002; Ludwig and Dietz 2008; Hassel 2010; Silvia 2010; OECD 2014; Statistisches

Concomitantly, in the throes of an economic slowdown, a large population of foreign residents could no longer be imagined as temporary workers. Indeed, many increasingly came to perceive their continued presence as a burden on the national economy. The troubled encounter with this reality of permanent immigration, rather than temporary solutions for labor shortages, brought to the surface as never before the latent, lingering notions of ethnocultural nation-hood and placed them front and center in public debates. Thus the fall of the Berlin Wall found the questioning of seemingly durable historical taboos and the revisiting of national narratives already well under way,[15] even as it drasti-cally redefined both the stakes and the terms of these processes. The ideological repercussions of reunification and the fall of communism became inscribed within an already disrupted and fragmented national project that had seen its key bearings melt into air and that had been desperately hunting for new ones. Significantly, the confrontation with new forms of social marginalization im-plied the vanishing viability not only of a national temporality of material pros-perity but inseparably too of biographical expectations and aspirations.[16]

NEW POOR, OLD GHOSTS

The interpellation of a nascent national imaginary into being has called forth apprehensions about the latent, sinister potentialities that it may awaken, re-sulting in a compulsive preoccupation with maintaining a tight grip on the frontiers of the "legitimate" political spectrum. These processes have been in-separably imbricated with public fears about those burgeoning marginalized populations, from the older generations of laid-off workers to younger cohorts facing diminishing prospects of entering the workforce. The question of how to govern their hopes and expectations, their affective attachments and aversions,

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Bundesamt 2014). In recent years, to be sure, Germany has become Europe's economic "power-house," rather than the "sick man" of Europe that it was during my fieldwork. Still, the processes outlined above have continued unabated, and universal prosperity has remained a defunct promise for many.

[15] Among the most prominent and controversial expressions of these processes, scholars often list the 1979 screening of the unprecedentedly successful fictional television series *Holocaust*, which many take to herald a new epoch in German remembrance of the crimes of National Socialism; Kanzler Kohl and former president Reagan's visit in 1985, on the anniversary of V-Day, to the Bit-burg military cemetery, where Waffen-SS soldiers had been buried, despite a broad public outcry in both Germany and the United States; the Historikerstreit of the late 1980s, which pitted intel-lectuals who argued for the comparability of Nazi and Soviet atrocities against those who insisted on the uniqueness of National Socialism and the Holocaust; and ongoing political exchanges that emerged in the 1970s but picked up pace in the 1980s about whether Germany is, or is not, a land of immigration (*Einwanderungsland*) (see Habermas 1988; Torpey 1988; Olick 1998; Huyssen 2000; Eidson 2005; Brubaker 2009).

[16] For a discussion of poverty trends in contemporary Germany, see Ludwig and Dietz (2008).

has therefore become vital. After all, at least as dominant historical narratives would have it, the unemployed masses occupied a leading role within the cast of characters that catapulted the Nazis into power. In a broader perspective, the concern with social unrest has left an indelible mark on the notably long and innovative history of the welfare state in Germany, beginning already with nineteenth-century experimentations in the national collectivization of risk through social insurance and the provision of certain welfare benefits. Even the German neoliberals of the Freiburg school, whose ordoliberal doctrine revered competitive markets and dominated postwar economic policy in the FRG, insisted on the indispensability of a strong state that would continually intervene in the social sphere to assuage the destructive potential of "massification" and "proletarianization." The shift toward Keynesianism of the late 1960s that followed the rise of the Social Democrats to power after the first postwar recession entailed an expansion and intensification of state concern with social discontent.[17]

Public fears about the dangerous potentialities that today's new poor spell, expectations from and attachments to the figure of a strong, paternalistic state, as well as the very governmental mechanisms already available for social intervention and welfare provisioning, all share these historical genealogies. But the nature of the anxieties that emergent forms of social marginalization call into being and the challenges they pose to German nationhood are very much grounded in the present, as are, too, the contemporary responses they would seem to incite. The management of this threat forms a hesitant, nervous, hardly coherent yet momentous endeavor of affective governance. Its elaboration, experimentation, and performance fall under the dominion of the state, if we understand the latter—as I do in this book—as extending far beyond its formal frontiers to include a host of institutional sites, discursive genres, and political technologies that propagate its ideological effects throughout the social

[17] The Freiburg school economists, while emphatically committed to the sanctity of competitive markets, rejected laissez-faire free-regulation assumptions as superstitious. Instead, they emphasized the social preconditions for the existence of free competition, which included the curbing of economic pressures toward massification, impoverishment, and proletarianization. They viewed the irrational social consequences of capitalism as a threat to the sustainability of liberal markets. Thus, a resilient economic order must be both free and humanly acceptable. For them, guaranteeing the social preconditions for economic freedom and competitive markets formed a continuous political task that required the constant intervention of a strong state. Such a state would function as the organizational center for mediating the interdependence of the economic sphere with the political, social, and other spheres. In the ordoliberal view, then, the free economy is nothing less than a practice of governance (Rieter and Schmolz 1993; Biebricher 2011; Bonefeld 2012). Officially committed to ordoliberal social market economy, postwar West German policy in fact always included a measure of Keynesian instruments and welfare provisions. The scales shifted drastically toward Keynesian policy principles starting in 1967, in response to the recession and with the formation of a grand coalition that included the Social Democrats. This included the expansion of redistributive measures and of automatic stabilization instruments such as unemployment benefits and deficit spending. The redistributive effects of the period were immense, as was the rise in social spending (Schnitzer 1972; Nachtwey 2013).

(Gramsci 1997 [1971]; Althusser 2001; Trouillot 2001). It is a project of governance that targets broad national publics and seeks to orchestrate, induce, and defuse a set of indispensable yet potentially inflammable affective dispositions. It addresses, of course, affective attachments to those no-longer-viable, Fordist-era futurities of job security, material prosperity, and consumer patriotism. But it also targets affinities to the figure of a state whose sovereignty and legitimacy increasingly come under attack. This figure today confronts challenges both from below, through forms of unruliness and disorder at the social and political margins, and from above, through transnational institutions of governance—most important, the EU—with questionable or entirely lacking democratic credentials. At the same time, this project of affective governance must attend to the appeal of competing national imaginaries with their divergent figurations of historical narratives. Finally, and perhaps most important, it seeks to mold affective relations to distinct forms of otherness that are variously construed as cultural, religious, or ethnic in their essence.

In this book, I understand affective relations as at once objects and effects of governance. But I also consider the very mechanisms of governance themselves as laden with affective stakes. Such a view requires that we set aside analytical distinctions between, on the one hand, affects as putatively autonomous, pre-social intensities, and, on the other, their subsequent mediated qualifications as articulable emotions (see Massumi 1995). Much less does it subscribe to a notion of affects as unlimited, emergent potentialities that herald the possibility of freedom from social regimes of linguistic and institutional mediation. Instead, in conversation with recent literature in the humanities and the social sciences, my emphasis here will be on social and political projects of regulating, generating, and neutralizing affective publics. I am interested, moreover, in thinking about these very projects as haunted by affects that are, if often not entirely articulable, then nevertheless always already historically qualified. Yael Navaro-Yashin (2012), for example, describes how in postwar Cyprus affects are politically induced by administrative and legal orders. She explores how, in turn, such affects are sedimented in and mediated by the materialities of a scarred landscape. From quite a different direction, Andrea Muehlebach (2012) has documented how in neoliberal Italy past attachments to Fordist forms of work have been incorporated into regimes of unremunerated, affective labor and "ethical citizenship." In these and other cases, affective publics emerge as always already marked by "the competing ways in which they get partially harnessed to social and political projects of value" (Mazzarella 2013, 40). Their outlines and their governance in this perspective index certain shared historical sensitivities and are consequently ideological and political from the start (Berlant 2011, 14–16, 158–59), even if they may exceed any particular framing. Both producers and loci of affects, the institutions of affective governance are never fully reducible to the putative rationality of bureaucratic governmentality (Navaro-Yashin 2012, 31–33). They always exude, as it were, a certain excess to

rational calculation. It is at the burgeoning bottom of an increasingly uneven social topography and at the simmering margins of the political terrain that they operate with special zeal and give rise to particularly palpable excesses, which is only a different way of saying that the social and political margins are precisely those spaces where these excesses become especially visible.

The young people who gathered outside the U-21 bar on that late May night with which I opened this chapter, and the sorts of projects of affective governance that gravitate around them, crystallize this contemporary encounter in Germany between new poor and old ghosts. Consider Rene, a burly skinhead whom I had only vaguely known until then, but who came up to me and enthusiastically laid out his plan to establish a youth club for him and his peers. No doubt he assumed I could help him sell the idea to the social workers with whom I collaborated. His appeal to me referenced a common trope with which far right-wing groups have sought to win support among young people. According to this refrain, the state has abandoned its "German" youths. In Berlin's Treptow-Köpenick, where I conducted my fieldwork, organized extraparliamentary groups and the federal NPD headquarters, which sits in the district, have diligently and efficaciously deployed such rhetoric. The resonance it has found among local youths set into motion a sustained campaign for a "German youth club," which included regular demonstrations, marches, and a petition to the mayor. The campaigners demanded a venue that would cater specifically to young right-wing extremists. Many of them had been barred from attending already existing establishments, and for good reason, since their presence there was not unwarrantedly perceived as threatening by many other visitors. Backed by experts, NGOs, and youth workers, the municipality flatly rejected their demands.

The refusal to funnel public resources to sponsor the leisure activities of Rene and his friends rests on impeccable reasons, which it is not my aim to question here.[18] However, what such dismissals fail to recognize are the reasons why the campaign for a German youth club found such broad resonance across the district. Its success registered the social realities that my informants faced daily: uninhabitable, at times dangerous domestic settings, in part the effect of long-term unemployment and alcoholism; a diminishing capacity to access other spaces and activities, admission to which usually requires payment, and the prospects of a future in which such capacity continues to decrease; and, not least, a historical moment in which austerity cutbacks and schemes of budgetary and administrative restructuring result in ever scarcer public resources,[19]

[18] In the past, the sponsoring of public establishments for right-wing extremist youths has not only meant the public funding of intolerant, exclusionary venues but has also turned out to strengthen local nationalist groups by providing them with space and infrastructure for their activities, even when, as had often been the case, such establishments were designed to assist in the "normalization" of their visitors.

[19] During my fieldwork, the Berlin government pushed forward with such reforms throughout the city under a general restructuring plan described as *Sozialraumorientierung* (social space orientation) (Bezirksamt Treptow-Köpenick 2005).

particularly compromising the ability to address social needs in marginalized urban peripheries. The story of Sylvia, the die-hard soccer fan, is exemplary in that regard. After the youth club in her neighborhood where she passed most of her afternoons shut down, an acquaintance invited her to join him and his friends, a clique of right-wing extremist soccer ultras. She gradually came to surpass many of her peers there, not only in her soccer fanaticism but also in her enthusiasm with the NPD. Notwithstanding their clear merits, then, zero-tolerance policies overlook the fact that political identifications are less a given state of things and more a dynamic process of consolidation. They therefore too often fail to address the forces that pull some far into the right-wing fringes.

In present-day Germany, the figures of Sylvia, Rene, and their friends stand simultaneously for the supernumerary masses and for intimations of genocidal nationalism. Throughout this book, we shall see how their story unfolds at the intersection of monumental efforts to govern and domesticate both threats, and we shall witness the sorts of excesses that this fusion calls into being. What I call the management of hate in this book consists in the strenuous labor of orchestrating the encounter between the two, the compulsive spawning of public imaginaries about them, and the unrelenting investment in their cultural repression and political excommunication. The management of hate, to be sure, is in this sense a particular instance of what I have already described as affective governance. It betrays in particularly patent ways, however, how the putatively rational and economistic paradigms of governance in fact answer to quite other scenes of political conflict and cultural contestation. As chapters 4 and 5 show, the management of hate holds a particular interest in governing right-wing extremist delinquency. But, as I argue particularly in chapters 8 and 9, it also encompasses a range of practices and institutions bent on fomenting certain affective dispositions and curbing others in so-called mainstream publics. And while specific political constellations and electoral results may push and pull it in more or less distinct directions, the management of hate in general forms an endeavor that transcends shifts in parliamentary power and perseveres through the rise and fall of governments and coalitions.[20]

In Germany, the management of hate, thus understood, forms an actually existing regime of neoliberal governance that clusters distinct discourses and practices and that seeks to orchestrate public affects. The concerns to which it responds reveal themselves as saturated with class anxieties, and chapter 5 especially pauses on the post-Fordist affects with which it overflows. The management of hate accordingly orients itself with special vigor toward the emergent peripheries of present-day capitalism. In the German context, however, it can

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[20] In chapter 8, I describe some of the programs established during the Social Democratic Party of Germany (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, or SPD) and Greens coalition rule under the leadership of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and explain how they have persisted, even if under different names, throughout the rule of the conservative union under the chancellorship of Angela Merkel.

only be understood in relation to the country's very particular twentieth-century history, as a collective mode of "learning to live with ghosts" (Derrida 1994, xviii). Put differently, it appears as a reflexive process of national becoming that stands between life and death, between past and present, and between spectral presences and post–Cold War geopolitical and cultural projects, which include the rebranding of the Federal Republic as a cosmopolitan country of immigrants. If it now bears the shadows of both the National Socialist and communist pasts, it is especially the former that has generated heightened angsts and that has served for mobilizing people into action. It is largely the weight of that past, too, that has shaped the management of hate as a field of governance traversed by an excitement with the obscene, a voyeuristic desire to see precisely that which is so strongly tabooed, a series of fantasies about the occult world of right-wing extremists in which the fetish of the state links up with the fetish of the nation.

The uneasy encounter in Germany between new poor and old ghosts at the same time is embedded within processes that have transformed the possibilities of formulating and performing political projects at a global scale, and this in at least two important ways. First, a number of authors have documented how the commodification of increasingly expansive spheres of life in the post-Fordist era, evident in the proliferation of consumer identifications and diversification of niche markets, has meant a rising colonization and fragmentation of the social.[21] I will describe some of the effects that such processes have exercised on the extreme right in Germany in chapter 2. For now, let us note that ever more fragmented consumption habits have increasingly come to define the terrain for fabricating not only cultural but also, and inseparably, political difference. In other words, under late capitalism the proliferating consumption cultures of the market have frequently become the defining modalities for articulating political identifications (Holmes 2000; Comaroff and Comaroff 2001).[22] The irony

[21] Thus, looking at the shift from urban politics to commercialization, David Harvey has discussed the postmodern relation between market power, product differentiation, and the increasing fragmentation of urban space (1989). Ana Maria Alonso has described the aestheticization and commodification of ethnicity and its effects on the national space (1994). Elizabeth Povinelli has examined the interrelations between economic slowdown, commodification, and the marketing of indigenous culture in Australia, as well as the threat spelled by multiculturalism to the Australian state and nation (1998). Fredric Jameson, from a different direction, has argued that late capitalist commodification has led to a postmodern fragmentation of the subject, of social life, and of the city (1984). Andreas Huyssen, meanwhile, has attributed the increasing fragmentation of national politics of memory, both in Germany in particular and around the globe more generally, to its growing commercialization and "musealization" under recent processes of economic globalization (2000). Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff have argued that the dominance of consumption at the cost of the erasure of production under "millennial capitalism" has meant the fragmentation of class culture and politics and the turn from homogeneity to difference in the nation-state space (2001). Slavoj Žižek too has identified an increasing commodification of politics in today's Europe (2006).

[22] Thus, in post-Soviet Lithuania the negotiation of contemporary public identities and their relation to the political present has proceeded hand in hand with, for example, the renaissance of "Soviet" sausages, which, although produced in the "West," have become the embodiment of a

here, of course, is that such processes have accelerated precisely at a historical moment in which, across much of the (de)industrialized world, the burgeoning ranks of the new precariat see both their capacity to engage in consumer identifications and their ability to wage class-based political struggles waning (Steinmetz 1994; Harvey 2001; cf. Balibar 2004b; Banks and Gingrich 2006). At this juncture, the nation surfaces as an alternative to globalist consumerism and commodified subjectivity but at once, too, as itself a niche market and a consumer identity for the economically excluded.

But, second, the figure of the nation itself has become progressively fractured, a distant cry from the homogenizing project that—if not always in practice, then commonly enough as an imagined horizon—stood as the hallmark of the modern nation-state. The shift from "homogeneism" (Blommaert and Verschueren 1998) to the officially endorsed celebration of diversity (whether linguistic, ethnic, religious, culinary, or other) within the national space bespeaks certain reconfigurations in the nation-state relation under what some have described as neoliberal multiculturalism (Taylor and Gutmann 1994; Žižek 1997; Povinelli 1998; Holmes 2000; Hale 2005; Jackson and Warren 2005). Thus, even as some may brandish it as a cure-all for the fragmentation of the social, the nation itself already appears as a particular term in a heterogeneous political landscape. As claims upon the state, far from disappearing, realign themselves into nascent collectivities, the nation becomes, for example, the structuring principle for new particularistic idioms of entitlement and discrimination— recall the demand that the municipality establish a "German youth club." Inseparably, and as we shall see particularly in chapter 8, civil society emerges in this context as the panacea for suturing the splinters of the social (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001). And hand in hand with the rise of civil society, forms of incivility and disorder have emerged as privileged sites for visibilizing the state and as yardsticks for assessing the state of the nation (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006). The repercussions of such shifts are evident in the compulsive redrawing of the political distinction that marks and excludes the extreme right in Germany. They come into focus, as well, in how my informants articulate and perform their political selves.

ON THE STREETS OF TREPTOW-KÖPENICK

While throughout this book I analyze a variety of different sources, the groups with whom I lingered at parks, train stations, and soccer stadiums at the southeastern edges of Berlin stand at its ethnographic core. Diffuse and unorganized

vanished mass utopia that now returns in the form of consumer choice (Klumbyte 2007). In post-reunification Germany, as many observers have noted, the bifurcation of national identity into East and West has relied upon—or better yet, has been interpellated by—the creation of a nostalgic market for GDR-era commodities and material artifacts (see, e.g., Berdahl 1999; Bach 2005).

groups, such as those of my informants, have played a key role in the surge of right-wing extremism after reunification, and especially in the rise in racist and political violence. Their nature has frustrated conventional methods of social science research on the extreme right, which tend to focus analytically on political parties, organizational structures, ideological discourses, electoral behavior, and charismatic leaders. But, for a number of reasons, it has also impeded their ethnographic study. Perhaps most crucially, the criminalization and tabooing of these groups has meant that their members often view strangers with (not entirely unjustified) suspicion, rendering access to them difficult. Nevertheless, given ample anthropological research in challenging and sometimes dangerous settings, the fact that, to the best of my knowledge, no similar ethnographic fieldwork has been conducted to date no doubt owes as well to the moral aversion that the groups with which I worked provoke.[23] Be that as it may, as I embarked upon this project, I could find little guidance in existing literature on how to overcome the methodological and ethical conundrums that it entailed, most urgent of which was the question of access.

Preliminary research in the summer of 2003 suggested that street social workers who serviced the groups in which I was interested could perhaps assist me. But it was not until I returned to Berlin in August 2004 and met with Andrea, Daniela, and Helmuth that I began to sense how rewarding this path could prove. During the sixteen months that followed, I accompanied them regularly on their daily rounds in Berlin's southeast, where they introduced me to their young, right-wing extremist clients. Helmuth, the eldest of the three, was thirty-six years old when I met him, a large man whose autodidactic intellect, local erudition, and creative imagination made for innumerable fascinating and informative conversations. The son to a family closely allied with the ruling Socialist Unity Party of Germany (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, or SED),[24] he was about to graduate from the border troops' officer course in 1989 when, as he put it, "everything that had constituted my life until then became absolutely worthless." Yet he associates the events of that year with an intoxicating sense of emancipation, mostly from his own ideological fetters. Unemployed, his academic diploma void,[25] he worked at odd jobs until becoming a street social worker in 1994. Thirty-three-year-old Andrea, who was tall and had long brown hair, spent much of her childhood abroad with her parents, who served in the GDR's diplomatic corps. An extraordinary sense of compassion, unwavering personal integrity, and an intimate tenderness won her great affection among the young people she served. After reunification, with her business management diploma unrecognized and the firm where she

[23] The relatively rare ethnographic studies in this field, while excellent in their own right, tend to rely on highly mediated sources such as media representations, discourse analysis, Internet websites, or, at best, structured interviews (Holmes 2000; Gingrich and Banks 2006).
[24] The SED was the ruling party in the GDR.
[25] Academic credentials gained under the GDR were often not recognized after reunification.

worked out of business, she took up various low-rank jobs. She eventually concluded that her talents and ambitions would remain frustrated lest she improved her academic standing. She graduated from a social work program in 2000, became a street social worker immediately thereafter, and was pursuing a second degree in criminology at the time of my research. From a small town in Brandenburg northwest of Berlin, twenty-six-year-old Daniela wore her blond hair in a ponytail, and her fair skin featured colorful tattoos that testified to her love of music. Time and again, her shrewd judgment of character and ability to divine the full picture from the sometimes scanty intimations that her clients and my informants often provided left me speechless. Daniela entered high school already after reunification. Her educational and professional trajectory was therefore not truncated by the fall of the GDR in the same way as her older colleagues'. Following high school, she came to Berlin to study for a degree in social education. She had met Helmuth and Andrea while she was still a student, and they recruited her to their team in 2001.

The three of them worked for the independent street social work provider Gangway. The organization was founded in 1990 and, at the time of my research, employed some fifty social workers in teams of three or four across most of Berlin's districts. Gangway received its financing partly from the city government and partly from district municipalities. Helmuth, Andrea, and Daniela worked under semiannual contracts with the district of Treptow-Köpenick. They targeted young, socially marginalized, and predominantly right-wing extremist groups that congregated routinely in several outdoor locations. When I presented my project to them and inquired whether they would allow me to accompany their team in order to gain access to the groups of their clients, they welcomed the idea. In fact, throughout my fieldwork, they went out of their way to help me with my research in innumerable other ways as well. With time, our arrangement grew more flexible: they would charge me with performing various errands with their clients on my own, and I would progressively arrive at Treptow-Köpenick independently to spend time with my informants.

Treptow-Köpenick is Berlin's largest district, extending over almost 20 percent of the city's landmass. Scenic water expanses and forests comprise about a third of its surface, and its landscape teems with the dissonant contrasts of Germany's reunited capital: from Köpenick's quaint old town on Youth Island or the bucolic sandy beaches and wide waterways of the Spree and Dahme Rivers to the bright contemporary architecture of the recently established "Science City" at Adlershof, the sprawling residential neighborhoods of communist-era high-rises in Altglienicke, the vast and daunting span of the Soviet War Memorial, or the long stretches of dilapidated industrial ruins. Settlement in the area surged dramatically with the rapid industrialization of the late nineteenth century, and since then it has juxtaposed some of the city's social elites and better-off families with broad working-class populations, the latter largely concentrated in its southern half, Treptow, where I conducted my fieldwork.
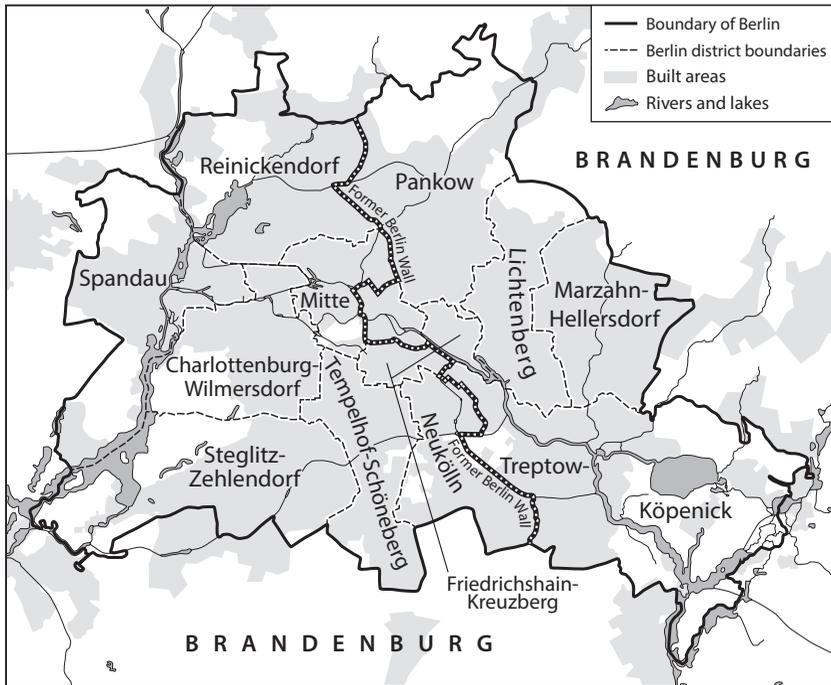
Map 1. Berlin.

The Social Democrats (SPD) and the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) have solidly dominated local politics in the district. For well over a decade, however, Treptow-Köpenick has also gained a certain disrepute for the presence of extreme right currents. It hosts the federal headquarters of the NPD, which has won some of its best electoral results in the district, and especially in those same areas on which the social workers focused their efforts. Militant extraparliamentary organized groups (henceforth *Kameradschaften* [pl.]; *Kameradschaft* [sing.]) have also been active in the district. The social workers were intimately familiar with some of their members, who persevered in their activities despite the official banning of their groups as anticonstitutional organizations by Berlin's Ministry of the Interior in 2005. Additionally, the district has witnessed regular right-wing extremist demonstrations and a significantly higher than average incidence of violent, sometimes grotesquely brutal assaults. My research led me to make the acquaintance of several among their perpetrators. Not least, extreme right sympathizers in Treptow-Köpenick benefited from the hospitality of various establishments—bars, restaurants, shops—that catered to them, relied on their patronage, and provided them with infrastructure for leisure, consumption, and, at times, clandestine meetings. With Helmuth, with my

young informants, and at times on my own, I made it a point to frequent most of these locations during my research.

My fieldwork, however, focused neither on political parties nor on clandestine cells but on the relatively diffuse and dynamic groups that gathered in a number of outdoor sites and whose members the social workers serviced. Because of their fairly heterogeneous compositions, I can only provide here a rough description of their general outlines. Gender mixed, their ages varied from the midteens to the midtwenties. Their socioeconomic backgrounds by and large ranged from underclass destitution to solid working-class households and their educational records from dismal to low. Many suffered from precarious domestic settings, with violent, abusive, alcoholic, or neglectful parents. In turn, violence, alcoholism, and delinquency were widely prevalent within their ranks, and a significant proportion, especially among the men, boasted criminal records for both petty and serious offenses: theft and shoplifting, physical assault and damage to property, arson and trespassing, possession of illegal weapons and debt evasion, or a range of criminal transgressions against laws governing right-wing extremist "things," which I lay out in detail in chapter 4. Few were gainfully employed and most depended on state disbursements. The more fortunate made their way into government-funded vocational training programs, but their prospects of subsequently securing salaried positions seemed slim. Virtually all came from East German households whose adult members have often been unemployed for the better part of the past two decades. Racism and xenophobic nationalism were deep and widespread, yet awareness of formal politics was, for lack of a better word, astoundingly rudimentary—several of my informants, for example, could not correctly name Germany's chancellor at the time. Only a handful had participated in organized political groups or attended demonstrations.

The social workers appealed to these groups with various subsidized leisure offerings—movie outings, bowling alley and billiard hall visits, excursions to the country, graffiti workshops, and so on—in order to break their dull routine but, first and foremost, as a cornerstone for winning their trust and for consolidating relationships that would enable long-term individual counseling. In such counseling they addressed a wide spectrum of needs: vocational training and job applications, health care, securing apartments, legal services, accompanying people through penal procedures, maneuvering labyrinthine state bureaucracies, or obtaining welfare and other benefits. Beyond the long hours at their clients' outdoor hangout spots, then, they shuttled almost daily between welfare, employment, and youth offices; courts and hospitals; and prisons and attorneys—all of which at best made for a very weak notion of a work routine. Speaking again in general terms, however, we would typically gather in the early afternoon at their office, located in the basement of a community center, to coordinate and plan the workday's schedule and complete various administrative tasks. From there, we would deploy to various outdoor locations,

occasionally for prearranged meetings with individuals but more often to linger
about, make new acquaintances, catch up with older ones, plan group activities,
collect information, or thrash out their clients' personal problems. The open-
ended nature of our visits, their irregular itineraries, and the protracted hours
of random chitchat offered excellent opportunities for extensive observation
and spontaneous conversations with the groups I set out to study. But the social
workers, themselves increasingly an object of my research, also constituted a
superb source of information on the youths they served in their own right,
commanding detailed knowledge of their biographical backgrounds, their so-
cial networks, criminal records, or political orientations.

Much like the groups we found there, the locations we visited presented a
shifting and diffuse geography. Nevertheless, we especially attended to three
areas with a high incidence of young, socially marginalized, right-wing extrem-
ist groups. All three were located in Treptow, the district's southern part, which
was particularly hard-hit by the virtually total deindustrialization that followed
reunification and where several sites emerged as regular meeting spots for such
people. The first, a *Plattenbauten* residential area colloquially known as the
"Ghetto," exhibited most glaringly the devastating impact of economic stagna-
tion and rampant unemployment. Once within convenient proximity to labor
sites, its location on the city's frontier has since rendered it an isolated enclave
severed from today's urban geography of production and consumption. Under
the countless windows of gray high-rises, benches and public squares have be-
come the territory of long-term unemployed adults and abject youths. The latter
presented more acute destitution and lower educational levels than elsewhere in
the district, and many cast their votes for the NPD. A second area included the
neighborhoods of Johannisthal and Schöneweide, at the heart of Treptow, which
fared somewhat less badly than the Ghetto owing to their central location and
superior integration into the urban infrastructure. Favorite outdoor hangouts
in Johannisthal and Schöneweide included a park, a number of playgrounds,
and an abandoned industrial zone. But these two neighborhoods also offered
a relatively abundant selection of consumption, entertainment, and leisure es-
tablishments that young right-wing extremists routinely frequented. And they
served as home turf for some of the city's most militant groups and activists.
Finally, the last area consisted of the environs of the Grünau train station, on the
city's southeast, which functioned as a peripheral transportation hub linking
highway, train, trams, and numerous bus lines. In sharp contrast with the first
two areas I described, few among the young people who gathered in Grünau
daily also resided in the neighborhood. Instead, their groups assembled loose
social circles from across the district. A hard core of fanatical fans of the local
soccer club Union, however, provided a fairly stable social nucleus.

My entrance to the field alongside the social workers shaped my research
in a number of important ways. At some level, to be sure, their young clients
perceived me as different from the social workers. As time progressed, I estab-
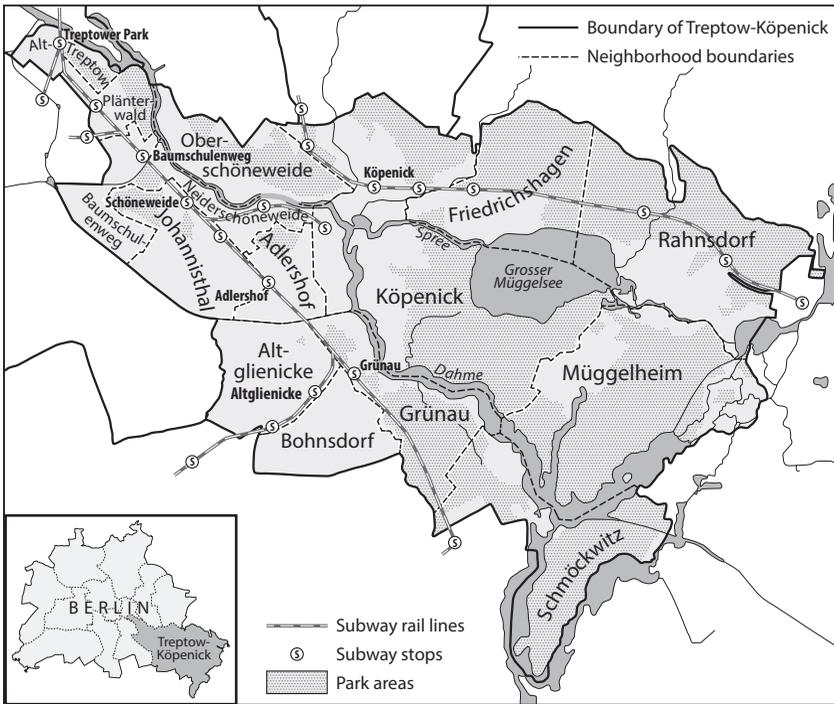
Map 2. Treptow-Köpenick.

lished personal relationships with my informants, spent more and more time with them independently, and participated in activities that clearly transgressed the boundaries of social work: accompanying them to soccer matches, joining them on weekend outings, or spending a night over beers at their apartments or hangout spots. My foreignness, too, stood in sharp contrast with the sophisticated local erudition of the social workers. Despite the initial suspicion that it provoked, my foreign identity slowly gained positive value, as my informants would test their English proficiency, take pride in my support for their local soccer club, or inquire about life in the United States. More significantly, perhaps, as the stranger "who comes today and stays tomorrow," I often sensed I benefited, as Georg Simmel (1971, 145) once put it, from "the most surprising revelations and confidences . . . about matters which are kept carefully hidden from everybody with whom one is close." In the German context, this meant that my informants would express opinions that, because so strongly tabooed, I felt they would less likely confide to, say, a German researcher.

The crucial place of street social work in mediating my research, at the same time, has meant an empirical focus on public outdoor spaces, disadvantaged

groups, and young populations.[26] At a more profound level, however, the many hours the social workers and I spent strolling the streets of Treptow or shuttling between sites facilitated conversations with them not only about my informants but also concerning a range of other themes critical for my investigation, from the legacy of reunification to the present state of German nationalism at large. As constant interlocutors, their words offered me fresh perspectives that themselves begged for analysis. The more their own crucial place in the management of hate revealed itself to me, the more they became key informants in my study. For reasons of expository clarity, and in order to distinguish between them and their young clients (my "informants"), I refer to them throughout this book as "the social workers."

[26] None of this implied absolute exclusion of other perspectives. The primacy of public space in street social work, for example, did not preclude insight into private places, whether during home visits for individual appointments, delivering or collecting documents, assisting with setting up apartments, or spending an evening chatting and listening to music. Similarly, while largely underclass, group compositions were heterogeneous and also included better-off individuals. Still, to the extent that interior private spaces came under my scrutiny, they were predominantly the apartments of individuals who spent much of their leisure time outside. Similarly, the focus on socially marginalized groups brought me into contact with social circles in which they made up a considerable portion. And the older informants whom I came to know were often adults who sustained significant relations with younger people.