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STATE OF THE FIELD

The Ultimate Challenge: Nationalism and Climate Change

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Abstract
Climate change has rapidly expanded as a key topic of research across disciplines, but it has remained virtually untouched in nationalism studies. Climate change is a boundless, uncontainable phenomenon that ignores class, geographic, and ethnonational boundaries. As such, it can hardly be comprehended within the limits of a nationalist world vision. This article reassesses this intuition by focusing on the situational and adaptive plasticity of nationalism, characterized by its notorious Janus-faced adaptability. I first identify and address a methodological stumbling block that precludes scholars in some areas of the humanities and social sciences—specifically nationalism studies—from conceptualizing and grappling with this unfolding reality. Second, I advance a typology that can work as a conceptual grid for studying similar problems that emerge at the intersection of environmental politics, climate change, and nationalism studies. I suggest two ways in which the nation and national narratives have been and are being mobilized to make sense of, contrast, reject, and incorporate new life-changing trends. I identify these, respectively, under the umbrella terms *resource nationalism* and *green nationalism*. I conclude by emphasizing the continuing relevance of nationalism in plans for ongoing global energy transitions.

Keywords: future; nationalism; climate change; Anthropocene; environment

Introduction

Scientists across disciplines have identified climate change as the greatest threat to human and non-human life on the Earth in the immediate future, a danger now so perceptible that it has been identified as such by the usually conservative World Economic Forum.[1] This awareness began at least 30 to 40 years ago (Rich 2018) with the first theoretical hypothesis and observations dating back to 1956 (Plass 1956).[2] *The Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al. 1972), a watershed report, was the first attempt to critically evaluate the limits of the dominant economic model. Immediately, the report was attacked by both business interests and the mainstream Left.

Yet, the reality of climate change only recently became accessible to the broader public. After years of orchestrated neglect verging on censorship (Oreskes and Conway 2010; Rich 2018)[3], a global movement to catalyze political action belatedly sprang up in 2018–2019 with the first demonstrations heralded by Extinction Rebellion, Fridays for Future, fossil fuels disinvestment campaigns, and countless other initiatives across the globe. These have occurred with varying intensities, with the largest simultaneous demonstrations reaching at least six million across the world, the largest of which occurred in Montreal, New York, Berlin, Rome, and other cities in September 2019 (Laville 2019).

Meanwhile, the global situation has rapidly deteriorated. Scientific research is churning out increasingly alarming reports of investigations revealing that the previous estimates of climate

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change scientists were far too optimistic (Ripple et al. 2020). In other words, climate change is developing at a much faster pace than initially expected while the human knowledge necessary to address the problem advances at a much lower speed than is required.

In this predictably cataclysmic scenario, it is difficult to keep up with the continuous flow of scientific research, let alone be psychologically prepared to absorb and transform it into a constructively shared narrative. Climate change is an uncontainable phenomenon that knows no class, ethnic, geographical, or national boundaries and hence cannot be comprehended within the limits of a nationalist *Weltanschauung* (worldview).

This article reassesses this circumstance but also reexamines it by focusing on the situational and adaptive plasticity of nationalism, characterized by its notorious Janus-faced comportment.

I first identify and address a methodological stumbling block which precludes scholars in some areas in the humanities and social sciences—specifically nationalism studies—from conceptualizing and grappling with this unfolding reality. Second, I advance a typology that can work as a conceptual grid for studying similar problems that emerge at the intersection between environmental politics, climate change, and nationalism studies. I suggest two ways in which the nation and national narratives have been and are being mobilized to make sense of, contrast, reject, and incorporate new life-changing trends. I identify these, respectively, under the umbrella terms of *resource nationalism* and *green nationalism*. I conclude by emphasizing the continuing relevance of nationalism in plans for global energy transitions, thus stressing the importance of connecting the field of nationalism studies to the phenomenon of climate change.

But first we need to set such a *problematique* within the broader methodological predicament in which we find ourselves.

Disciplinary and Methodological Stumbling Blocks

Climate change has emerged as a key concern in the social sciences and humanities, although this has happened relatively slowly in comparison to scientific advancement elsewhere (Ripple et al. 2020). Contiguous disciplines have, however, reacted differently. On the one hand, refugee and immigration studies have rapidly caught up by envisioning new human actors and coining auxiliary concepts, such as environmentally displaced persons (EDP), climate exiles, forced environmental migrants, eco-refugees, and environmental-refugee-to-be (ERTB), within the new umbrella term *climigration* (Ketola 2015, 2017; Matthews and Potts 2018). Related areas like immigration studies and refugee studies are thus specializing in climate asylum to the extent that a whole new terminology has been developed. Gender studies are also producing an expanded literature on the topic, underlining the important tendency of "masculinist identities, cultures and militarized institutions […] to favour large-scale remedies, such as geoengineering, minimize mitigation strategies, such as reducing energy use, and emphasize "security" problems" (Nagel 2012, 467).[4] Genocide studies have also worked on the ultimate human consequences of climate change (Cromwell and Levene 2007; Crook and Short 2014; Zimmerer 2015), paying attention to the shift from the 20th century as the century of genocide to the 21st as a possible century of *omnicide* (Levene and Conversi 2014).

On the other hand, nationalism studies graze over a *terra nullius* apparently oblivious to such impelling changes. The delay is flabbergasting because nationalism is profoundly related to the upcoming catastrophe, albeit in a negative way through association with denial and the canopy comfort of everyday nationalism (Goode and Stroup 2015)—part of what the Indian novelist and social critic Amitav Ghosh (2016) has identified as "the Great Deception." Moreover, as asylum applications respond to temperature fluctuations (Missirian and Schlenker 2017) the demographic pressures exerted by climate change directly impinge upon nationalist and xenophobic reactions.

Of all the disciplines and sub-disciplines within the human and social sciences, nationalism studies is among the last to embrace the study of climate change, let alone develop an interest in and

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a vocabulary on the subject. This is most surprising given that nationalism has proved to be a giant obstacle in the advancement of multilateral climate negotiations, as in the case of COP 15, the UN climate change negotiations held in Copenhagen in December 2009 (Christoff 2010). The pressure exerted by big business and nationalistic regimes resulted in a nonbinding political agreement: the Copenhagen Accord. Yet, right-wing governments are not unique in pursuing these policies. Wherever nation-states have become hegemonic institutions, nationalism pervades governmental public policies (Conversi 2012, 2014). This structural context militates against globally-oriented initiatives to curb greenhouse gas emissions.

The hard and so-called exact sciences are themselves embedded in robust doses of conservatism: environmental changes have been too rapid to fit with consensus, as obedience to coded narratives and established dogmas often tend to prevail within all scientific fields. Although a broad consensus had been reached already by the late 1990s (Cook 2016), it took the work of an entire generation of researchers to incorporate the findings of climate change until, by 2013, 97 percent of scientists across disciplines agreed on its anthropogenic origins (Cook et al. 2013). Ten years earlier there was already cross-disciplinary agreement that most of the observed global warming over the last 50 years is due to greenhouse gas concentration (Oreskes 2004).

Science generally reflects the painfully cautious attitude and ethics of scientists, obsessed with providing bulletproof empirical evidence for any new finding which may challenge existing scientific narratives. But with respect to an existential threat like climate change, this has been counterproductive. For instance, the loss of glaciers has advanced at too fast a speed to be accepted within mainstream science in the absence of carefully tested empirical evidence (Gornitz 2019; Radford 2015). The diagnosis has been late also in the case of underwater glacial melting, as shown in recent ground-breaking research (Sutherland et al. 2019). By the time this evidence was found to lead to some of the most destructive effects of climate change, it was far too late to stem the trail of devastation initiated by this meltdown.

Such global problems are formulated differently according to specific national contexts: while in most countries climate change is seen as the most imperative and vital priority (Pew 2019), in some, like Russia and Israel, it is still perceived as a low priority. In small island states like the Maldives, Kiribati, Vanuatu, the Marshal islands, Tuvalu, or Nauru, climate change has assumed the urgency of an apocalyptic calamity, as sea level rise is an immediate threat to their very existence.

The social sciences are, however, at least one step backward in comparison to the exact sciences. For instance, they are largely reactive rather than proactive regarding the emergence of new technologies and most forms of scientific advancement, still largely unable to address their social potential as well as their limitations.

Entering the Anthropocene

Can the watershed notion of *Anthropocene* build a new narrative appropriate for the current liminal age? Stratigraphers, geologists, chemists, physicists, and other scientists have proposed the term to describe a new geological epoch that began in the second half of the 20th century as a consequence of the irreversible human impact on the Earth's surface. The notion of the Anthropocene has increasingly been introduced in many social science disciplines—for example, in philosophy (Latour 2018; Syvitski and Kettner 2011), international relations (Burke et al. 2016; Chandler 2018; Chandler, Cudworth, and Hobden 2018; Harrington 2016), political science (Biermann 2014), geopolitics (Dalby 2016, 2017), international law (Vidas 2011), criminology (Holley and Shearing 2018; South 2015), development studies (Gills 2015), and social theory (Clark and Yusoff 2017; Szerszynski 2017; Yusoff 2016).

The humanities, however, seem to have only belatedly become aware of many developments in climate change science. This is a particularly serious indictment for those past-looking disciplines, such as archaeology and history, which with their current conceptual and methodological tools find

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it very difficult to grapple with the new challenges. For instance, the notion of the Anthropocene has found insurmountable hindrances to being accepted in huge areas of historical research, let alone archaeology, despite the efforts of influential historians, such as Dipesh Chakrabarty and others (Chakrabarty 2009, 2018; Robin and Steffen 2007).

Historians remain reluctant to accept any form of deep history that would trespass on the traditional self-imposed limits of what is still largely defined as prehistory (Smail 2009) and confined to the utterly specific, the local, and the recent past. Attached to the classic division between contemporary, modern, medieval, and other ages, most historians tend to believe that we still live in the contemporary age, even though a growing number of scientists tell us that the new epoch of the Anthropocene has begun (Steffen, Crutzen, and McNeill 2007; Zalasiewicz et al. 2011).

The humanities in general seem still to be barely aware that the coming changes may herald a much more traumatic and sudden shift than the slow, familiar entrance into modernity that heralded the era of nationalism. So far, only a few leading historians have embraced the new Anthropocene-centred chronology without hesitation (Chakrabarty 2018) while others diverge on its temporal boundaries (Malm 2014).

The lack of a clear historical narrative and vocabulary is only part of the problem. Literature itself is unable to grasp the unfolding scenario. In *The Great Derangement,* Indian novelist Amitav Ghosh (2016) cogently explains how climate events can be highly difficult to narrate or render literally. Yet, literature remains essential to expressing environmental tragedies at the local level: Abdi-Jamil Nurpeisov's poignant Kazakh novels narrate Soviet developmental madness (Sharipova 2019), culminating with the ecosystem collapse of the Aral Sea in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan (Karakalpakstan autonomous region) in the early the 21st century.

The phenomenon of climate change therefore needs first to arise in the imagination, in the way humans make sense of the world. If literature doesn't move on, the film industry and related arts and entertainment forms will also move sluggishly and tentatively, incapable of building a grand narrative to encapsulate and convey the highly complex multilevel drama that stems from the evolution of breakneck speed climate change.

The social sciences have, however, been excessively slow in incorporating undesirable new data emerging from other disciplinary areas, especially if these data do not corroborate previous narratives or resound with well-trodden paths, even more so when they appear to be too pessimistic to be comprehended within the oldest given narratives. The paths of everyday nationhood seem to be more comfortable due to the persisting incapacity to discuss climate change in daily life contexts. Occasionally, public opinion in specific countries may present their nation-states as paradigms of environmental consciousness: in Sweden the *flygskam* movement inspired by Greta Thunberg's use of railways and an eco-yacht has led to "a significant decline in air travel […] and a concomitant increase in rail journeys" (Higham and Font 2020). But few, if any, nation-states as a whole can convincingly put themselves forward as paladins of lifestyle changes that could lead to climate mitigation.

On the other hand, environmentalism has often been appropriated by nationalism and has occasionally percolated through the banal nationalist rhetoric (Billig 1995). In fact, everything that happens in and around climate change impinges upon and is reflected in every other area of the social sciences. Think, for instance, about the consequences of climate change for political life: one of the possible scenarios of its unchecked trajectory is the destruction of the state system as we know it (Parenti 2011). In fact, the later states intervene, the less likely they are to have sufficient leverage, resources, and capacities to address the increasingly unmanageable consequences of the climate crisis.

The more governments yield or appeal to state-sanctioned nationalism, the less likely they are to be able to operate and cooperate in a way that urgently requires smoothing down emotional passions about the Other. It is therefore astonishing that nationalism studies have not yet produced a reflection on this global challenge, which will no doubt be reflected in the way nations are made and nationalism is nourished.

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Two Ways in which Nationalism Studies Can Approach Climate Change

Politics today operate around a paradox: while nationalism claims to rescue nations, it is in fact accelerating their rapid demise. Nations now face the greatest threat to their survival from without and from within—and will do so even more in the years ahead—yet nationalism stands in the way. This is because the nature of the challenge requires collaboration and multilateralism, the building of bridges rather than the rising of boundaries.

Nationalism remains intrinsically a boundary-building process and is therefore ill-equipped to address a vital challenge like climate change. Nationalism remains largely built against another external Self, an outside community lying beyond national boundaries without which the very definition of nations remains challenged and challengeable (Conversi 1995).

I envisage and identify two possible ways in which nationalism can be related to, or appear to be a reaction to, climate change. The first can broadly be identified with resource nationalism; the second has occasionally appeared here and there as a form of green nationalism.

Let's begin with the first type, largely identified in several studies with a narrative of climate change denial (Washington and Cook 2011) and business as usual. I argue that the climate denial storyline frequently overlaps, but it is not coterminous, with the well-known practice of resource nationalism, as studied in political and human geography and contiguous disciplines (Haslam and Heidrich 2016). This form of resource nationalism should be distinguished from far-right nationalism and populism, although it very often overlaps and merges with them. Resource nationalism can in principle be appropriated by any regime that wishes to pursue a sealed agenda of control over territorial resources independently from the lives of the people living in the territory while ignoring whether they are negatively affected.

The second variety has not yet been fully studied, even less theorized or conceptualized, but it can broadly be identified as a form of green nationalism centered around national sustainabilities, something currently emerging among a few stateless nations (Jones and Ross 2016). Research on national sustainabilities has yielded interesting results, but it hasn't yet sufficiently connected with the broader dimensions of either nationalism or climate change.

It goes without saying that a third option could potentially go much further forward, beyond the hidebound limits of the sluggishly slow-moving nation-state system with its sealed oppositional narratives. Since all attempts to tackle a global challenge such as climate change would need to transcend national boundaries and strictly sectional or regional interests, multilateralism has become a sine qua non for human survival. But rather than an old style form of multilateralism made through long-term negotiations and agreements, the new forms of policy making must be based on swiftly reached decisions as demanded by the climate emergency we are locked in.

This third option, once simplistically called *cosmopolitanism*, is being enacted in a new scenario in which synchronicity and simultaneity constitute the only suitable framework for offering a more appropriate set of modalities based on collective action, more so than an imaginary *cosmos* conjured up by a few neo-Kantian intellectuals. In fact, I argue that the very notion of cosmopolitanism has now radically changed in a way that Kant and the older cosmopolitans would barely conceive. Therefore, I propose that it should be reconceptualized as *survival cosmopolitanism.* Survival cosmopolitanism is defined here as the new global consciousness emerging from the existential threat of the climate emergency, which impels people to move beyond older nation-state boundaries and combine multiple actions across national frontiers on the understanding that these very frontiers are now dangerous obstacles to the very survival of nations. It is not cosmopolitanism by individual choice, not even an ideological form of cosmopolitanism for elitist consumption, but a cosmopolitanism dictated by awareness that the old socioeconomic order has forever and suddenly changed. That is why we need to understand whether nations and nationalism may ever be able to offer a contribution to the coming transition.

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Resource Nationalism

The first approach, outlined above, is resource nationalism, a form of nationalist rhetoric that uplifts and sacralizes soil-rooted national resources as a common good even though only a tiny minority of the population actually benefits from their extraction and exploitation. Natural resources are presented as belonging to the nation, by which term it largely means the upper elites. Often, resource nationalism is accompanied by fossil fuel extraction and the denial of its negative consequences. This sometimes includes a drive to control natural resources located within the national territory, especially once governments take ownership of fossil fuel reservoirs, allegedly in opposition to the interests of multinational corporations but nearly always in synchrony with them.

To cite a few examples, emerging Saudi nationalism is still largely focused on oil and petroleum as an almost sacred resource even while exploring carbon management and CO_2 capture techniques as a possible cop-out for the system's incapacity to diversify the Saudi economy. In fact, the national oil company, Saudi Aramco, remains by far the single largest polluter and originator of greenhouse gas emissions in the entire world (Heede 2019).[5] It is predictable that, under such a regime, oil can become weaponized, a national asset and resource that has potentially destructive consequences not only for its neighbours but for mankind as a whole (Vivoda 2009).

Similarly, types of resource nationalism that focus on continued fossil fuel extraction include Russia's state-owned oil company Gazprom, Azerbaijan's SOCAR (State Oil Company of Azerbaijan Republic), Kazakhstan's KazMunayGas (KMG), and the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), all focused on hydrocarbon (oil and gas) production, processing and sales as key assets of national identity, "security," and development (Stevens 2008).

Within Europe, the nationalized role of coal and shale gas has been highlighted by the rise of far-right Polish resource nationalism. Government strategies include a largely US-imported "utilization of law, research, and domination of the political debate to ensure that the shale gas exploration is legitimated on the local level and in the European Union" (Materka 2011, 599). There are strong implications for Poland's de-democratization process related to the "disjuncture between the rapidity of shale gas exploration versus public knowledge" of the consequences (Materka 2011, 601). Fracking has also led to the emergence of an antifracking movement, but this has been bullied into silence by both nationalism and lack of debate, as the Polish press of both the business-oriented center-right and the social-liberal center-left close to the Solidarity trade union have embraced nationalism in opposition to the environment (Jaspal, Nerlich, and Lemańcyzk 2014). Russian and Polish elites thus stand apparently united in a common front against global concern for the fate of the world.

In the case of India with the fifth largest coal reserves in the world as of 2018, coal has also been sacralized under Narendra Modi's regime, even though its extraction is concentrated in a few regions in eastern and south-central India. Not by accident, these are also some of India's poorest regions and states, confirming research concerning the *resource curse* (Vandeveer 2013): the largest coal deposits are to be found in the more tribal states of Jharkhand (26.06 percent in 2018) and Odisha (24.86 percent), where the proportion of Adivasis (Scheduled Tribes) is higher than in most other states. The remaining half of coal production is concentrated in Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, and Maharashtra.

In all cases of resource nationalism, there is clearly a difference between the homogenizing nationalist narrative and the reality on the ground, where the areas and regions where mineral resources are extracted are most severely affected environmentally and often the least to benefit from extraction, exploration, and spoliation.

Since the national elites promoting resource nationalism perceive the nation as a cohesive, congruent, and homogeneous whole, the international community reacts by accepting the fait accompli of unilateral homogenization (Mandelbaum 2020). Incidentally, this points to a persisting problem with nearly all climate change research and data at the international level: the obtrusive persistence of methodological nationalism (Chernilo 2017; Goode and Stroup 2015, 6–8), as

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reflected in simplistic measurements that calculate the quantity of CO_2 emissions at the nation-state level rather than breaking it down by region, localities, or classes. This obviously further contributes to the spread of resource nationalism by highlighting the overlap between state boundaries, economic choices, and patterns of consumption.

The ethical dimension is quite straightforward: if it causes extensive damage to one's neighbours or to the rest of the world, resource nationalism is no longer a national matter and should be addressed as a form of international aggression or, alternatively, as a crime against humanity (White 2015; White and Kramer 2015). Additionally, this form of nationalism has traditionally been used to distract attention from more urgent matters (Solt 2011).

Here, the scholar's task should be to reveal the emerging contradictions between acts and facts, between claiming to work in defence of the nation and the real practice of intergenerational nation-killing resulting from both the short-term and the long-term effects of hydrocarbon exploitation. Both Trump and Putin's responses to Greta Thunberg's appeals have been characteristic of this trend.

Each form of resource nationalism is attached to its own nationally-specific grounded resource(s), whether coal, gas, or oil. This contributes to, and perhaps transcends, the notion of grounded nationalism (Malešević 2019) in the sense of its resilience, durability, widening support, and so on. Such groundedness can be amplified to imply seizing the actual ground or soil and the resources lying beneath the Earth's surface. Even though nationalists consider population and territory almost as a single entity, governments can go deep into the ground to seize resources, thus separating themselves from people while simultaneously claiming to speak in their name.

Green Nationalism in Minority Nations

Besides the interests of the fossil fuel industries and other concentrates of economic power, nationalism has proved to be one of the major obstacles in international negotiations relating to climate change. Climate negotiations typically occur between government representatives at the highest level of state power. These are not only influenced by corporate lobbying but also by the difficulties which all governments encounter in addressing such a complex and comprehensive problem. As can be seen with regard to the governments of India, the USA, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Poland, Turkey, and other regional powers, it has been relatively easy to mobilize nationalism to conceal the ruling class's incapacity to comprehensively address the threat of climate change.

I have briefly addressed above some of the problems stemming from the persistent use of methodological nationalism in climate change data and negotiations. This section looks at a different perspective. Although research has been published on national sustainabilities (Jones and Ross 2016) and regionally-based environmental policies (Elliott and Breslin 2011), no studies have explicitly connected nationalist politics with climate change awareness and pro-climate political action. In particular, no link has been systematically advanced between current environmental initiatives among minority nations and climate change related green policies beyond specific case studies. To date, the relationship between climate-friendly initiatives in minority nations and regionalist parties has remained an understudied area.

The identifiable existence of the above trends poses a problem and a question: Is nationalism necessarily an obstacle to the adoption of robust climate change policies? Or, otherwise formulated, can a form of nationalism be envisaged that is sufficiently aware, dedicated, alert, and efficient in promoting climate change mitigation strategies, being less inclined toward denial and business as usual?

Here, I wish to consider the possibility of a green nationalism as is mostly emerging within sub-state nationalist parties in minority nations. This new trend toward robust climate action should, however, be conceptually distinguished from earlier ecological and environmental components within nationalism, particularly in periods of rapid modernization. Such, mostly nostalgic, movements toward a pristine past at a time of rapid change have been studied from a historical perspective. These include works on the greenish ingredients of German nationalism at a time of rapid

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industrialization (1872–1914) (Blackbourn 2011) and research on Theodore Roosevelt's path-breaking role in the creation of national parks through the United States Forest Service (USFS) (Tyrrell 2015). The front-runner was obviously Yellowstone National Park in California (est. 1872), with its strong association to the state's identity (Alagona 2013). The contemporary strong anti-environmentalism of the neoconservative Bush-Trump agenda hence sharply contrasts with the traditional Republican legacy and identity of the previous 100 years (Turner and Isenberg 2018).

Nationalism can be appropriated by both pro-environmentalist and anti-environmentalist groups and interests. In the Anthropocene, however, we no longer have the luxury of indulging in a simple ecology versus environmentalism opposition. These movements, both grounded in their respective scientific approaches (Devall 1991; Dobson 1995) are clearly no longer sufficient to tackle a much broader, totalizing, 360-degree threat like climate change, which cannot be dealt with uniquely by any of the above approaches. There needs to be a considerable shift from the preservationist initiatives of the 1970s to the policies needed to combat climate change in the 2020s.

Some nationalist parties in stateless nations, particularly in Europe, seem not only to be immune from resource nationalism but propose an environmentally focused agenda for advanced social transformation to radically address the issue of climate change. In both Scotland and Catalonia, one can detect continuity in how environmental issues are perceived and championed among minority nations across time. The underpinning rhetoric is similar, focusing on traditional nationalist tropes, such as territory, soil, and belonging, and fusing these with the progressive political stance of most contemporary autonomist and pro-independence movements. This fusion between territorial belonging and progressive politics leads to the emergence of what I have identified as green nationalism.

Among a wide range of measures, the Scottish National Party (SNP) has put forward the first declaration of a climate emergency. In line with a previous tradition of Romantic love for the countryside, the Scottish executive has proposed highland rewilding in which heritage and sustainability combine with nationalist aspirations (Brown, McMorran, and Price 2011). It may thus be possible to identify a rhetorical and ideological continuity between contemporary climate-friendly policies and the privileged relationship with soil and soul of nationalism, specifically regionalist and sub-state nationalism.

Within the Spanish state, the Catalan Nationalist Left has proposed important environmental laws, interestingly contrasted by the Spanish Supreme Court, but this trend is not reflected in the Basque Country, where environmental legislation has struggled to emerge and materialize (Conversi and Ezeizabarrena 2019).

Quebec has possibly witnessed the highest concentration of people mobilized against climate change; the largest demonstration in the world took place in Montreal in September 2019 when 500,000 people took part in a march.

The question arises whether movements aspiring to political independence will be able to continue pursuing these policies once statehood is achieved. Past experience seems to suggest that this may not be the case. If we turn back the clock to the time just before the breakup of the Soviet Union, when climate change was not yet a political issue, several nationalism movements incorporated strong environmental and ecological themes within their pro-independence agenda, including eco-nationalism and antinuclear activism. For instance, pre-independence Estonian nationalism was a driving force behind the creation of the USSR's first national park in Lahemaa in 1971 (Smurr 2008). In the former Eastern Bloc, environmentalism was central to the transition process leading to the end of Soviet domination (Auer 1998). However, research has demonstrated that once independence was achieved these themes vanished almost overnight, mutating into state-centered developmental goals, including the embracing of different forms of resource nationalism (Dawson 1996; Malloy 2009).

Although it seems that these movements evaporated as a result of success in obtaining statehood, one should question whether they disappeared because they could not compete with the pressures of economic and political transition from state socialism to market capitalism. Most populations throughout eastern Europe (from East Germany to Siberia) have been deeply and negatively

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affected by the transition to free market capitalism and its associated mass consumerism that became the hallmark of the new power elite. Some authors go as far as to claim that such transitions caused millions of deaths, as free-market reforms plunged the people into abject poverty while enriching a minuscule oligarchy (Cohen 2000). While the mainstream media were pointed toward the bizarre consumerism of the new elites to prove that the transition led to the American way, they ignored the plight of the vast majority of people across all walks of life who had suffered during the so-called transition. The highly visible outperformed and obliterated the barely visible. The notion of *structural genocide* has also been used for various phases and forms of capitalist encroachment across the world (Leech 2012). Nationalism scholars need to consider and study in depth which factors contributed more to the collapse of environmentalism and its absorption into the politics of nationalism.

Conclusions

Perhaps unique among social sciences sub-disciplines, nationalism studies have seemed impervious to the pervasive trend of (the study of) climate change, including the incorporation of related terminology, like the notion of Anthropocene. One could speculate whether the consensus among hard scientists about the anthropogenic roots of climate change (Cook et al. 2013) has yet reached at least some of the social sciences and the humanities.

Climate change is most likely the single greatest threat mankind has ever confronted and is rapidly becoming one of the crucial emerging themes in contemporary politics. The prospect of not having a collective future has clear implications for both nations and nationalism as well as political life in general. This will be even more pronounced if the conventions, morality, ethos, visions, notions, and ideas that hold our societies together—such as justice, freedom, and citizenship—are also lost.

Nationalism scholars need to look at two contrasting ways in which nationalism can be mobilized with respect to this issue: either under a pro-big business denial agenda, as has most often occurred or, perhaps, by liaising with the broader movement fighting climate change and demanding significant sociopolitical change, as advocated in this article. Yet, while the latter is usually seen as cosmopolitan and internationalist, it may not work if not robustly rooted into a local reality. In contrast, the former has, so far, been a prerogative of nation-states that appropriate resource nationalism through homogenizing populist appeals.

In fact, nationalism has proved to be one of the major obstacles to the survival of the very nations it claims to defend. While we are still waiting for the rise of a new green nationalism that is capable of transcending the previous limits of ecologism and environmentalism, we are left to deal with the ghost of something we thought we had left behind two centuries ago. Nationalism may have been an appropriate ideology until the late 20th century, but it is becoming increasingly unfit for the new world that is unfolding.

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Notes

1 See Frost (2019).

2 Swedish physicist and physical chemist Svante Arrhenius (1859–1927) first identified the processes leading to the greenhouse effect by the end of the 19th century and even identified the geological consequences of global coal production and consumption in "a layer of limestone of 0.003 ml. thickness over the whole globe, or 1.5 km^3 in cubic measure" (Arrhenius 1896, 19).

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3 For a continuous update on government censorship in the USA, see the *Silencing Science Tracker* (n.d.).
4 Terms originally in British English spelling were changed to American English spelling.
5 For a synthesis, see Climate Accountability Institute (2019).

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