

**“To hell with you and your union,  
we are going whatever you say”**

An ethnographic study of how class, race, ethnicity, and immigration affected  
the Brexit referendum



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Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the Master's degree  
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2018

# Acknowledgements

First, I want to say a big thank you to everyone in England who helped me with my project. I was met by open-minded people who let me learn to know them in a very good way. Especially a big thank you to my door opener Tandy who gave of her time to help me to get in touch with different groups in the field.

Secondly, a big thanks to my great supervisor Andrew Lattas who have with he's great knowledge and good insight given me a lot of advices about how I should write this thesis. Also, a big thanks to the Department of Social Anthropology at the University in Bergen, especially to Hilde Merete Ellefsen who have helped me with all the practical things during my time as master student.

I will also say a big thank you my fantastic family who has been a great support for me during my time as a student. You have always encouraged me to do what I want to do and supported me during good and bad times at my fieldwork.

Also, thank you to the "biology gang" who have been there for me during my years as a student in Bergen. Especially a big thanks to Oline Marie Steinkopf, Lisa Hagevik and Linn Vassvik for visiting me in England, to plan a trip with you in the end of my fieldwork made me very motivated and it was good to have something to look forward to. Thank you also to Vilde Eikeset for all the good dinners you made to me before my exams, I really appreciate it. A big thank you also to the two people who have been proof reading my master thesis, Ivi-Emilie Panayiotou and Kjartan Dregelid.

At last, but not least, I want to say a big thank you all my fellow students who is some great people that has made the writing process a bit better.

Kjersti Følling Slettemark

Bergen, May 2018

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# Chapter 1: Introduction to the Field

*The decision of Britain to Brexit, has left much of the EU in doubt,  
For the future for Britain and Europe, now the vote has been made to get out.  
So, Kirsty a curious student, who wondered what Brexit might mean,  
Came to Wigan from Norway in search of, the truth of the working man's dream.*

*Now why would she come here you wonder, not a classical town of great note,  
But a town with an honest opinion, that knew what to do at the vote.  
On the day of the ballot they voted, fed up with the Brussels elite,  
Who said if the left their daft union, we would all fall dead in the street.*

*But we in Wigan know better, and from Europe we wanted release,  
And now that we've voted for Brexit, we feel we can do as we please.  
So being stubborn and British, we've said "we will do it our way,  
To hell with you and your union, we're going whatever you say".*

*With the road ahead uncertain, the world watching how we respond,  
The Pundits are having a field day, and say we have got it all wrong.  
And this is what interests Kirsty, the opinion of those on the ground,  
Her submission and findings on Brexit, for her Uni degree they are bound.*

*(Poem made by one of my interlocutors - Personal Communication, June 2017).<sup>1</sup>*

## **Research topic and motivation**

In the summer 2016 there was held a referendum in the UK where the citizens were asked to vote if they wanted to stay in the EU or leave it. The majority voted to Leave the EU, and this got the name Brexit. In this thesis I will analyse how class, immigration, ethnicity and race

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<sup>1</sup> When I am referring to my own name in this thesis I am not writing Kjersti, but Kirsty since that is what my interlocutors called me

affected the Brexit referendum. Through the whole summer, both home and abroad, the topic of the news was about Brexit. There was discussion about how shocking this was, how it would affect other countries, how it would affect Norway, and so on. I was mainly reading the Norwegian media, and I do remember that the Norwegian newspapers presented this news in a way where the reader could get the impression that this would probably have a negative effect on Norway. Because of all this discussion, I got curious to find out more about the reason for why the majority of the English people wanted to Leave the EU. I was thinking that I could get a deeper look at the topic and talk with the people who did vote in the referendum. Why did people want to change something that been decided for over 40 years ago? Who were the people behind the votes? I wanted to meet and talk to them instead of just reading what the media wrote about them.

I decided to conduct fieldwork for five months in Wigan, North West England. My fieldwork lasted from the beginning of January to the middle of June 2016. The reason I decided to go to a city in North England was that many people in this area voted Leave. It is perhaps no accident that the unemployment rate in this area is high. According to the Office for National Statistic (2017a) in the beginning of 2017 the highest unemployment rate was in North East England with 6 percent, and 4.3 percent in the North West England. Before I choose where to do fieldwork, I read George Orwell (1962) book *The Road to Wigan Pier* where he documented the bleak conditions of the working class in Northern England. I thought that with all the changes that have happened since the 1930s it would be intriguing to see how today is compared with the 1930s.

My fieldwork was done in the Western world. There have been recent discussions among anthropologists that the new generation of anthropologist are choosing “safe” and are going to places in the Western world. One of those who is critical to this option and thinks that today’s anthropologists are doing more of an investigation rather than anthropological fieldwork is Signe Howell (2010). She argues that anthropology had previously been an open-ended research in unknown places (Howell, 2010, p. 189). However, today, a new generation are choosing “safe” projects due to different reasons ranging from private to political reasons. Many choices can be motivated by pragmatic reasons such as family situation, future employment, or financial constrains (Howell, 2010, p. 201). I have not done what anthropologists have done for many years ago and go to an exotic country. Instead I chose to do a fieldwork in the Western world and to study a political topic because the latter is often informed by social relations and cultural values and beliefs. I still feel like an anthropologist

because of the research method I have used, namely fieldwork. I do understand Howell's concerns that anthropology has changed through the years, however, I do not believe that this is a bad thing. The world has also changed and continues to change in ways where everyday life is reformulated. When I look at a large political issue like Brexit, I feel that as an anthropologist I do see it in a different way from other social scientists in that I rely on ongoing everyday interactions for my data on social relations and culture. It is important for anthropologists to look at large events in the western world, for often those events are part of broader transformations happening not just in other European countries. Issues such as national control of borders, unemployment, welfare expenditure, immigration, housing, health and national-ethnic culture dominate contemporary European politics and are part of the rise of popular Right Wing parties. Brexit offers a window to this popular politics.

## **Methodology**

My research is based on interactions with a small number of people in one town in England, so my data cannot be used as statistical sample for a wider range of people. Nevertheless, I believe it does capture a certain aspect of contemporary social reality. I decided to do most of my research in the town centre, or areas very close to the town centre because many political, social and cultural activities happened in this area. During the first weeks, I searched for people and areas that could be a part of my study. I received some advice from people who told me where I should go. I visited different places to see if I could get some advice about where I could connect with people. It was interesting to see people's reaction when I told them what I was doing in Wigan. Some people told me: "why did you choose a depressive theme like this, and not something more interesting?". Such comments articulated people's ambivalences about Brexit and the divisions it had caused between people, often friends and family.

I was very lucky with the first person I contacted when I was looking for a place to live. I had seen an advertisement for people who were looking for a place to live on an English web site. Tandy contacted me from this site. She asked me online what I was going to do in England and offered to help me to connect with other people. So, we set up a meeting. Tandy was my door opener, and she also became one of my interlocutors. After I met her and the people she advised me to contact, I met more and more people, a technique for recruiting interlocutors that methodologists call snowballing. Tandy was a part of a



cycling group and she invited me to join this group, so I could connect with people. Through this group I met one of my main interlocutors who also was a part of a jogging group. In the jogging group, people were very open-minded and inclusive, so I found that this was a very good group to do my research. People who attended these two activity groups were a lot older than me. Tandy thought that I should hang out with people of my own age, so she introduced me to a French girl who was my age. Through this girl I met two of my younger interlocutors. These interlocutors had fulltime jobs and I did not meet them weekly as I did with most of my other interlocutors. Instead we would set up an occasional convenient meeting in a coffee shop or a pub. The way I got to know my interlocutors showed me the importance of the snowballing method and how important it was to get a connection with someone, who provided a foothold in the field and access to different people.

In addition to these sport activities, I also worked in a charityshop three-four times a week. In this place I collected data on how English workplace are becoming incorporated into the English Welfare system and its objectives. This shop sold furniture. I volunteered to work in this shop at the same time as I started my fieldwork. By helping out in the shop I feel that I got more out of my own fieldwork. I remember how on one of the first days in the shop, one of the unpaid workers asked: “how long are you going to stay here?” I answered: “I will be here for five months”. She said: “that is long, then you will be one of us in the end”. I feel now that she was partly right because in the end I received many diverse tasks and other people who unpaid workers or volunteers were started to ask me different questions about what they should do in the shop. Workers in the shop did come and go frequently because many of them were sent from the jobcentre and had other tasks to perform. This sometimes made it difficult to tell everyone about what I was doing. However, with the regular people who worked in the shop alongside me, they were well aware about what I was doing. I often discussed my topic with them and asked for their understanding of their issues.

As an anthropologist, you need to use your whole body as a tool and in many situations, I came to understand what this meant (O’reilly, 2012, p. 99; Madden, 2010, p. 19). For example, I have never enjoyed jogging, but I saw that the jogging group could be interesting to follow so I joined. I found that I had to jog at least one day every week with my interlocutors. When I participated regularly and with commitment I became accepted by the group. This made it easier to ask the right questions, I came to understand that verbal communication was important as an analytical tool. I do not know how it would have been if I had gone to another country where it was difficult to understand the language since I saw it

was very important to speak the same language as my interlocutors did speak. I found it hard enough to understand the North English dialect which is quite distinctive to the English that I am used to listening and speaking.

When I cite my interlocutors, it is sometimes based on my sound recordings of them and sometimes based on my own notes of conversations. The latter are very close to how my interlocutors did say things. I will note in the thesis when I am using the sound recorder and when it is from my own notes. Sometimes I have modified quotes very slightly so as to bring out the meaning clear. Usually I interviewed people alone, but in the jogging group I also did some group interviews. The reason for this was because in this group they were good friends and confident to discuss things with each other. They did not have problems to open up in front of each other. People may sometimes feel that if there are individual interviews that it is like a journalistic interview, or something like that. With group interview, the collective discussion is something people are experiencing in their everyday life (O'reilly, 2012, p. 133: Alasuutari, 1995, p. 94).

### **Ethical consideration**

In this thesis, I use the word interlocutors instead of informers because I am doing my fieldwork in an English-speaking country where the word informer is associated with something negative. When I met people, I introduced myself and told them that I was in Wigan to study Brexit, and to see how the social class system, immigration, race and ethnicity affected it. I told them that I am a master student at the University of Bergen, and that this research is for my master thesis which requires I do 5-6-month field research, and then write about it for one year. At the charity shop where I was a volunteer, I asked the manager if it was okay that I could use information I received whilst there doing my research, and that was not a problem. All the people I mention in this thesis has approved that I can write about them. People who did not give me this approval are removed from this work.

Whilst writing this thesis, I have been reflecting whether I should call my interlocutors “the British” people or “the English” people. The Brexit referendum was for the whole Britain, but the different countries which are part of Britain voted differently and therefore they need to be handled differently. In the thesis I switch on what I call my interlocutors depending on the context. I mainly refer to them as English people because I am doing my

field work in England, but it needs to be born in mind that there was also much migration to England from other parts of the UK.

In this thesis, all persons (interlocutors) are anonymised to protect their privacy. I have not chosen to anonymise the town as I am not writing anything inappropriate or critical and the town also has a history that needs to be acknowledged. I have anonymised some places, like pubs that I visited. I have also written in a way where it should be difficult to find which people from other contexts made certain statements. However, it should also be noted that most of these statements are repeating, re-circulating and commenting on widely published positions.

### **Interlocutors**

All my interlocutors had British citizenship. Everyone, except for one had been born in England, or another British country such as Scotland or Ireland. The person who was born outside the UK had been born in Israel. One interlocutor who was born in England had parents with a multicultural background. The rest of my interlocutors had parents who were born in the UK. There is not much movement of overseas migrants into Wigan, for according to the office for national statistics (2015), there was only 4 percent non-UK born residents in Wigan. According, I do not have any migrants as my interlocutors. Originally, I was thinking that I should have some members who could speak for this group because some UK citizens who were born overseas voted for Brexit. However, in Wigan it was hard to get access to this group and it might have been more possible in larger more cosmopolitan cities. It just needs to be borne in mind that there was a complexity to Brexit and that some immigrants already in the country – for example from Commonwealth nations - voted for Brexit as a way of consolidating their own belonging to the nation.

My interlocutors were split in how they voted, some voted for and others against Brexit. There is a variation in the age of my interlocutors. Three of them are younger people in their 30s. One is in the age of 40. The majority of my interlocutors are from the age 50 to the beginning of 80. There was variation in their class background and what education level they had completed.<sup>2</sup> I will use different works that have discussed social classes, but

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<sup>2</sup> The name of the school grade in UK is different from the American. Therefore, I will brief mention that primary school is from 4 – 11 years. Secondary school is from 11 years, and up to 16 years. After that it is college until they are 18 years, and then it is University.

especially Pierre Bourdieu (1995) classic work on the social class in his book *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Media do also have an effect on people's opinion, and what newspaper and media channels people follow is often shaped by the class to which they belong. Here I will use Sheldon Wolin's (2008) work on democracy and media to help analyse what I found in my research.

## **Brexit referendum**

In 1973, Britain joined the EU. Not everyone agreed with this, and many people have campaigned to withdraw from the EU since this day (Mason, 2016). UKIP, which is a strong anti-EU party, has been growing in popularity over the latest years. It was David Cameron, when he was the Prime Minister, who ended up organising the referendum for Brexit (Mason, 2016). Though Cameron wanted to stay in the EU and did not think the Leave vote would win, he was pressured into calling the referendum (Mason, 2016). Cameron was the leader for the conservative party and ever since then there has remained some disagreement in the party over whether the UK should continue to stay in the EU or not. Boris Johnson, who is currently foreign minister, was one of the leaders in the conservative party who wanted to withdraw from the EU (Mason, 2016).

In the referendum, for England, there was 53.4 percent who voted for Brexit, and 46.6 percent voted against. The majority also voted for Brexit in Wales. However, this was not so in both Northern Ireland and Scotland who voted against Brexit (Hunt & Wheeler, 2016). The referendum result led Cameron to resign as Prime Minister and Theresa May took over the role even though she had previously been pro-EU. She told the electorate that she would respect the people's will (Hunt & Wheeler, 2016). The negotiations concerning existing citizenship rights, trade and the free movement of people for when Britain will have the EU have started and are ongoing. March 29, 2019 is the date when all the negotiations should be finalised (Hunt & Wheeler, 2016). Some days before the June 2016 EU referendum a tragic event happened when the female Labour MP Jo Cox was shot by a man with links to neo-nazi groups in Britain and the USA. Witnesses heard the man scream: "Britain First" before he repeatedly shot and stabbed Cox (Booth, Dodd, & Parveen, 2016). She headed a group opposed to Britain leaving the EU and headed a parliamentary group for Syria and friends. For her supporter she died because of her views and her death indicates the level of nationalist

anger against the EU and any compromising of Britain sovereign autonomy (Booth, et al., 2016).

Much of the reason for why people wanted to Leave the EU was because of immigration. Many believe that it is now harder to get a job in the UK because there are too many new immigrants coming to live in the country. In UK there are 30.3 million people who are employed, and 3.4 million are immigrants (Office for National Statistic, 2017b). The unemployment rates are going down. In January 2015, there was 5.7 million unemployed, while in October 2017 there was approximately 4.3 million unemployed in the UK (Office for National Statistic, 2017b). But this has not altered public perceptions and rising anger against immigration which can perhaps be traced more to neo-liberal transformations in the welfare state, greater forms of austerity and poverty for the working poor, rather than just levels of immigration and poverty. My thesis seeks to document those transformations in the welfare state and in ways of governing the poor that are responsible for part of the hostility by the white working class against new immigrants.

### **General election 2017**

Theresa May did take over as Prime Minister when David Cameron withdraw after the Brexit referendum. She was an unelected leader. Therefore, in 2017 she called for a new general election, so she eventually could get votes to become an elected Prime Minister. The results for this election was that Theresa May got voted to continue as Prime Minister. However, the Conservative lost 13 seats in the parliament while Labour got 32 more seats in the parliament. The results made the parliament to be a hung parliament<sup>3</sup> (*The Guardian*, 2017).

### **Description of Wigan**

I remember when I was choosing the place to do my fieldwork that there was one specific newspaper article that had a large impression on me. The New York Times had an article a few weeks after the referendum about Wigan and the referendum (Higgins, 2016). For many decades, Labour have been the most popular party in Wigan. The Conservatives have not won an election there since 1910 (Higgins, 2016). To vote for the Leave can be interpreted as a last

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<sup>3</sup> Hung Parliament is when a party fail to win the majority and need support from another party (Syal & Travis, 2017).

desperate effort to save jobs and communities which residents saw as being undermined. Over the last few years, there have been increasing forms of austerity that have made it harder for people to access health care, council housing and government welfare. The EU referendum can be seen as a protest vote against austerity with many conservative politicians like Boris Johnson blaming Britain's obligations and contributions to the EU for government cutbacks and for the failure to curb new immigration. Many saw this as what was making Wigan residents suffer, they had enough and wanted to show that they needed to be now prioritised (Higgins, 2016). This is also shown in the poem I opened with in this thesis. This poem is composed by one of my interlocutors who voted for Brexit where he is making clear the working class people in Wigan voted because they had enough and wanted freedom from the EU. 63.9 percent of voters in Wigan voted for Brexit, which is one of the highest proportion in England (Illingworth, 2016). In Wigan, from October 2016 – September 2017 there were 4.3 percent unemployed people. From the age 18-24 there was 4.8 percent unemployed people (Nomis official labour market statistic, 2018). Alongside this there were 22.5 percent who were classified as economically inactive because there were either a student, sick, discouraged, retired, or something similar (Nomis official labour market statistic, 2018). The latter figure is also partly an indicator of austerity cutbacks, that is government rules designed to get people off the official unemployment figures by deeming them economically inactive. It these increased forms of austerity in Wigan that disguise the true level of unemployment which were being partly resisted and protested against with the EU and immigrants providing a convenient scapegoat.

Wigan is a town in the Greater Manchester area which is located between the two large cities of Liverpool and Manchester. There are around 160,000 inhabitants in Wigan town, but there are many more if the whole Wigan Borough is also included (Jørstad, 2009). Wigan is a de-industrial town, coal mines and cotton mills were the main industries in the town up until the 1980s (British History Online, 1911). Back in the days there was a large miners industry in Wigan. The living and working conditions of the miners is described by Orwell (1962) in very minute detail in the *The Road to Wigan Pier*. The coal was taken by the Liverpool-Leeds canal. Many families still remember how their lives revolved around the mining industry. Locally produced coal was very important for Britain up until the 1970s when it started to compete and become uneconomical when compared to open-cut imported coal (Black, 2011). Margaret Thatcher's cutbacks in subsidies and protection for the coal and cotton industry in the 80s, led to their rapid decline (Ram, 1985). The workers in the mines did fight back and

they went on strike. Out of economic necessity, some miners continued to work during the strike and were labelled “scabs”. This produced deep divisions in families and can explain some of the sensitivity in Wigan to internationalisation of the economy and globalisation. In Wigan, the first thing that hit me was how many old buildings there were in the town. It did not seem that building new buildings in Wigan was something they was being prioritised. Every day I saw people living on the street and begging for money, something that also made me think that there were many poor people in the town but also that social welfare services were very differently organised from those in Norway.

# Chapter 2: The Left Wing and The Right Wing Politics

## Introduction

In the UK, like much of the western world, the political sides that dominate national politics are often called the Left Wing and the Right Wing. There are large tensions between these two sides, but both the Left Wing and the Right Wing are being redefined with many working class individuals now aligning and voting with the right, which is no longer seen as the party of big business as it was in earlier days. Right Wing populism has always been there and has historically changed, grown and shrunk. Its heyday in Europe was during the 1930s up until the Second World War. During my fieldwork I went to political meetings of both the Left Wing and Right Wing where I got the chance to see how the different parties operate at the local level. The Left Wing was divided locally into two parties called Left Unity and Social Worker Party (SWP). For a popular Right Wing party, I got the chance to join a UKIP party. The parties' meetings I joined for all the parties was localised in Wigan's neighbouring towns. In this chapter I will write about contemporary English political life in its everyday forms. The difference between the Left Wing and the Right Wing has traditionally been important in English political life. The Labour Party has traditionally been seen as a working class party, but with the passage of time and with changes in the class system they have changed their policies and perceived alliance as they sought more and more middle class voting support. I want to describe how this was experienced by sections of the working class, some of which saw it as a betrayal. Here I will discuss the main political agendas that were discussed publicly in the meetings that I attended. For the Left Wing parties, the struggle against race and racism was their main agenda. The Right Wing meetings, they were also heavily concerned with race, or at least race and ethnicity. In this thesis I will use the word race not to denote real biological differences but perceived racial differences. My focus is the cultural and social construction of racial differences which are often blended with ethnic differences. However, their focus was on how Britain was culturally and socially different from other European countries and its identity was being compromised by the EU and its management of race and ethnicity, especially with regard to its politics on immigration and the free movement of people within the EU.



## **The history of the Labour Party**

The Labour Party is a centre-Left party created in 1900. Its first election campaign was in 1906 (Labour, 2018). The Party emerged out of many years of struggle by working class people, trade unionists, and socialists for better wages, housing, health care and living standards in general. Many people from the working class did gain a class voice in the British Parliament (Labour, 2018). In most of the campaigns there were promised that the working class political representatives to look after the interests of the working class (Driver & Martell, 1998, p. 9). The Labour Parties close relations to the trade unionist was very important back in the early days of the Labour Party and the party received many votes from working class people, especially those who had a strong belief in the trade unions (Heath, Jowell, & Curtice, 2001, p. 125). As the class system has changed through the years, there has been a change in distribution of voters (Heath, et al., 2001, p. 18). The nature of work has changed, and this has affected the class system as well. Many people are now working in non-manual, service-sector and non-unionized work rather than in factories or mines (Goodwin & Milazzo, 2015, p. 16). This has changed people's feeling of the class belongings and the party they felt aligned to has also changed. Furthermore, more and more people are going completing University education and this also affects their sense of class attachments and their knowledge of political information (Goodwin & Milazzo, 2015, p. 16). The Labour Party perceived a need to change its policies, so they could reach out to the middle classes and gain broader mass of electors. Rising affluence produced an aspiring working class that no more thought of themselves in traditional working class terms and this led the Labour Party to rethink its policies and political rhetoric and to move away from the language of class antagonism (Heath, et al., 2001, p. 18). The Labour Party also tried to appeal to another group of people and that is the new ethnic minorities moving into Britain who were often disadvantaged (Heath, et al., 2001, p. 18). When Tony Blair was elected as a new leader for the Labour Party in 1994, he made a new slogan for the Party: "New Labour, New Britain" (Driver & Martell, 1998, p. 12). People who had previously thought in 1987 that the Labour Party was concerned mainly about the Unions had more than halved in 1997 when the Labour Party redefined itself as the New Labour Party (Heath et al., 2001, pp. 125-126). The election in 2001 showed that the gap between conservative middle class voters and working class voters had fallen, this showed that the connections between class and party choice has weakened (Evans & Tilly, 2015, p. 301). There was a tendency where it looked like New Labour was inspired of neo-liberal policies ideology that economy must be treated like a

machine, where the global market is best treated as an automatic and self-instituting system that requires minimal social, cultural, political or institutional interference (Hall, 1998, p.11). For Old Labour, social policy in the broadest sense was the heart of the Party. This meant looking after welfare services in health, housing, education and social security. The Party was seen as fighting to decrease poverty and promote equality as the basis for citizenship and social cohesion (Driver & Martell, 1998, p. 77). In a shock to many traditional labour voters, New Labour announced in 1997 that they would cut benefits to single parents even though they had earlier said they would help them (Driver & Martell, 1998, p. 88). New Labour also made changes in immigration policy (Mulvey, 2011, p. 1487). They labelled some immigrants as “good” or “wanted”, and some as “bad” or “unwanted” (Mulvey, 2011, p. 1478). In 2004, there were ten new members states in the EU and many of the unwanted immigrants gained rights of access. If these immigrants were wanted or not was often based on geographical and skill factors (Mulvey, 2011, p. 1479).

My interlocutors were divided over which party they should vote for. At the charity shop, where I worked, I was told about how two of my interlocutors had been arguing over which party now best suited the working class - the Labour Party or the Conservatives. One discussant - a middle aged man - thought that it was best to vote for the Labour Party because they had always been the working class party and listened to the opinions and concerns of working class people. He was pro-EU, like many in the Labour Party are. For him, to vote for The Conservatives would be wrong because he thought that they were more concerned with the interests of the elite classes. The Conservatives are also often split in their discussions over the EU, some are Pro-EU while some are against. The other discussant whom he had been arguing with was an elderly woman. She had replied that it was stupid to vote for Labour Party and that the Conservatives were now the best party for working class people. The Conservatives supposedly did a better job of protecting workers living standards, employment, wages and rights. This woman had seen the changes introduced by Blair and was angry over the way he had changed the labour party.

During a time of changes in the class system, there can also occur corresponding changes in political movements. I remember one day when we were at the lunch room and there was a picture of Tony Blair in one of the newspapers that lay on the table. Then the woman who was voting for the Conservatives really expressed the anger and dissatisfaction she had against Tony Blair. People have many aspects to themselves and these can play a role in deciding for which party they will vote. It is not only about what kind of class people are a

part of, but also their ethnicity, gender, occupation and age can play an important deciding role. In the above example of the two people who argued, the man was in his mid-40s, without children and not married, whilst the woman was in her mid-70s, divorced and two children. Her elderly age group tends to be more conservative leaning in its voting patterns (Tilley, 2015). Both individuals were from the working class but embodied two different perspectives in life about the future and the government of society. This was probably affected by where and from whom they now got their information from.

In Wigan, as shown in chapter 1, the Labour party has been the largest party for many years, but many people still voted for Brexit even though the Labour party was becoming pro-EU. The working class in rural areas and small towns has not been moving that way. Even though they are less under threat from migrant residents and immigration, they have become more Right Wing (Lawton & Ackrill, 2016). Since there was both a majority vote for Labour in Wigan and a majority vote to withdraw from the EU, it is likely that many people still voted Labour whilst also voting for Brexit. This shows the complexity of the referendum, and there are plenty of reasons for this complexity. First, there are many policy agendas in the different parties, and for some people it is often more about the basic ideology in the party, than about any single political issue. They may disagree on the question of Brexit, but their habits and social relations say that they should still vote for the Labour party. The second reason may be over which type of Brexit people wanted. Many Labour voters wanted to have change, but not radical change, they wanted something like a soft Brexit. They would withdraw from the EU because they believed they should take back national governmental control, but they did not want a Brexit where the racism and ethnic intolerance would increasingly grow and isolate Britain from many EU nations.

### **How the Left Wing meetings work**

The Left Wing parties that I visited were two small parties, Left Unity and Social Worker Party (SWP). Before I came to England, I found an event advertised on Facebook called: Brexit and Trump. The Left Unity were the organizers for this meeting and so I contacted them. I was told that I was welcome to join their meeting. The man who answered my Facebook message, Tim, later introduced me to other people. Tim is unmarried and has two adult children. He has a long history of being politically engaged. The meeting attendance had a round where participants told me their name, age, work, and how they voted in the

referendum. The meeting was held in a pub, there was a separate room where it was quiet. Some people did drink beer, some drank coca cola, and some just drank water.

Left Unity did always make Facebook events for their meetings because their meetings were open to the public. It was mainly individuals over 40 years of age who attended these meetings for the Left Unity except from one boy in his 20s. There were at least two married couples at the meetings. Some of the people at the meeting were single, and some of them married. Most participants seemed to be working class people with similar political opinions. The meetings for the Left Unity were held once a month. In the first meeting I attended, there were some members from the SWP who also came to the meeting. They told me that the two parties sometimes corporate with each other. At this first meeting, they discussed how to decrease what they saw as growing racism in the aftermath of Brexit and Trump's 2016 election campaign. In particular, they wanted to warn people in the town that Trump as president was a danger to the global world. They also talked a lot about UKIP and how bad they thought that this party was because they thought they were not political educated but were having their prejudices manipulated by scapegoating migrants. They were concerned about the way they were doing their policy and thought that UKIP made limits between UK nations and other nations because of the policy they have.

The second time I attended a Left Unity meeting, there was only Tim and Stuart. The latter was a younger boy around my age who was unmarried and without children. Stuart had only recently started to be politically engaged because he wanted to shape the direction of politics in the country. I was thinking that it was weird that they had a meeting with only two people. The discussion was mainly about the upcoming general elections, and how to mobilize so that Jeremy Corbyn could win the election. They also asked me some detailed questions about what I thought of English politics. I had to remind them that I was not British, and I was there only to do research and so I did not have enough knowledge to answer their questions at that point in time. Tim explained that though Left Unity was its own party, they were supporting all Left Wing parties. He noted that some people were members of both the Left Unity and the Labour Party. He was not sure if the Labour Party thought this was ok, but for the Left Unity there was no problem.

SWP had more regular weekly meetings which were attended only by men. Some of them were married but they never brought their wives. It seemed like this party was male dominated with the men responsible for the political agendas and the women were at home taking care of the domestic sphere. Most of men were in their 50s, but two of the men who

sometimes attended the meetings were in their 30s. Usually, it was the same people who participated at the meetings, with around 6-10 individuals attending these meetings. This party arranged many events in Wigan such as an anti-Trump rally and another on “how to save the National Health System (NHS)?”. SWP also held their meetings in a pub, and people drank beer, water and soft drinks. Their meeting took place in a pub as well. At the first SWP meeting I attended, they had a guest who talked about housing, and how to get more houses for working class people. They noted how possessing a house said something about how successful someone was. A house was important for an individual’s status, their sense of pride and social standing. It said something about how well people’s finances were. Previously, it was noted that someone had to have a problem – like unemployment, physical or mental illness, family instability - so as to be homeless, but today it was capable of affecting everyone. Reviewing the history of North West England, they told me how even after the war there was many bad houses in the area. Some had cracks and gaps so large that you could look down the street, and even sense the humidity in the street. Many of these houses that formed the inner slum areas were torn, and never built again (Orwell, 1962, p. 45). Orwell (1962, pp. 45-46) wrote that houses in the 1930s was very old, like around 50-60 years, and many of them was not good enough to live in. There was not enough house in the industrial areas, and the rent was high. In Wigan, there was over two thousand houses that no one had lived in for years because they were so worn (Orwell, 1962, pp. 45-46). At the meeting they said that social housing was built by local councils. Many of these houses were squeezed together and the houses were built very small in apartment complexes. One person at the meeting complained that large grocery stores were built, but not houses to live in. There is much reason to be distraught over current housing problems. Statistics show that the chance of owning a home in the UK has more than halved over the last 20 years. Statistics for North West England show that in 1995/1996 more than 60 percent of adults between 25-34 years owned a house, while in 2015/2016 35 percent owned a house (Partington, 2018). This is not because they do not want to own a house, but rather because they increasingly cannot afford to own a house. Young adults with a wealthy background can afford it but not people with low and average incomes (Partington, 2018). There has also been a decline in council provided, with existing social housing being sold and new apartments not being built to replace them.

The agendas of the different party meetings were usually very similar. Even members of parties, Left Unity and SWP, were Left Wing leaning, they did not all vote Remain. Of

those who attended the meetings, two individuals from the Left Unity and two individuals from the SWP chose to vote Leave. They did not vote Leave because they thought that the Leave campaign was good, but as a protest vote against the government over how it had handled things in the country. The conservative government at the time was led by David Cameron and it supported remaining in the EU. My interlocutors thought politicians needed to care more for them and understand that the country needed changes, and things needed to get better for the working class. Changes in education, the NHS, in work, housing were some of the major issues. It was the reason why many Left Wing individuals voted Leave. Many who voted Remain told me that they were not fully sure that they had made the correct decision and had also thought of making a protest vote to Leave. However, many of them experienced the Leave campaign as full of racism and so chose to vote Remain because of that. However, the majority of individuals at the meetings voted Remain.

Both parties discussed what consequences Brexit would have for people who were not born in the UK. One woman had heard that some of the polish kids were crying when they were walking home from the school because they did not know if they could stay in the country. Many individuals thought Brexit might not be fair for foreign people residing in the UK, often for long periods of time. All the friendships they had made and the new life they had established might fall apart if they needed to move back to their native country. They did not like the insecurity that Brexit would bring on people whom they often worked with, their kids went to school with, their close neighbours, or other foreign people they had a close relation with. Some of the Remainers did not even know anyone who was foreign-born but they did think they should be allowed to stay in the country.

### **Race and racism**

Some of the people from the Left Unity and SWP who voted Leave later regretted it because they saw how much racism the Leave campaign unleashed and articulated. Racism was one of the main agendas for both parties. In every Left Wing meeting that I attended racism was a topic. The meeting participants discussed how they could stop racism. The two first meetings with Left Unity and SWP was only a few days after Trump started in his job as a president of the USA. He had campaigned on building a wall to stop illegal immigration and on deporting foreigners accused of crimes in the USA. Trump as a president made many individuals even more worried about an increase in racism that could become socially institutionalised. Many

believed it was now important to stand together against growing racism and intolerance. Some had participated in anti-racist organizations in the Greater Manchester area that sought to reduce racism. Both Left Unity and SWP wanted to inform people more positively about immigrants and to explain that the Leave campaign had been telling many lies. However, the parties did not agree in how they should tackle the problem. Left Unity wanted to knock on people's door, while SWP thought that this would cross a line concerning what people would tolerate. Many people might object to them coming to their door step. One member at the Brexit and Trump meetings claimed that Trump as a president had complicated the situation when talking about racism. It was not only in the UK there was racism, but it was a growing world problem. A Right Wing Brexit would make the UK closer to Trump, whilst a Left Wing Brexit would make UK citizens not as close to him.

Race is often a part of those things that organize society, its classificatory categories provide a system of differences that operate in human societies. It is a hierarchical system that separates and ranks, it continues to produce differences in modern human history (Hall, 2017, pp. 31-32). Race needs to be understood as a discursive operation of meaning that function socially, historically, and politically (Hall, 2017, p. 64). It does provide a system of meaning, that it is a way of organizing and meaningfully classifying the world (Hall, 2017, p. 31). According to Hall (2017, p. 74) when it comes to the history of racism, it has moved from being grounded in biological essentialisms to being grounded in a cultural politics where the cultural aspects are featured as important. Many of my interlocutors believed that racial concerns were the reason for why many people chose to vote for Leave but these were stressed over concerns such as cultural differences, cultural unity, maintaining the identity of British culture, protecting British values like justice and freedom. Here the national appropriation and identification with universal values like justice and freedom is part of a process where the specificity of different cultural traditions has become central to the construction of national identities. Each becomes conceived in very particularistic, homogenous, culturally self-enclosed, and self-sufficient ways that highlights the divide between the British people and the non-British people (Hall, 2017, p. 93).

At the other side of the political scale is the Right Wing, and in the next section of this chapter I will outline the ideas and politics of the Right Wing. There has been a rise of right-wing populism over the last couple of years, and this is related to a growing nationalistic attitude that was very strong in the meetings of UKIP that I attended. I will use the theories of

Benedict Anderson (1991) and Ernest Gellner (1983) to throw light on how this nationalism is working.

### **The rise of right-wing populism**

I have mentioned that recently there has been a rise of new forms of far right-wing populism, who is going to be on the global scale (Pasieka, 2017, p. 19). Since the 1980s many extreme Right Wing Populist parties has grown and become mainstream in many West European Countries<sup>4</sup> (Rydgren, 2005, p. 414). Both the sociocultural and economic cleavage has increased the past few decades, and one of the reasons is immigration and multiculturalism with immigrants becoming marginalised, unemployed and at the bottom of the workforce. Growing cultural and economic cleavages has expanded political opportunities for Right Wing parties (Rydgren, 2005, p. 421).

Two of the people in the front of the Leave campaign were the Conservative Member of Parliament (MP) Boris Johnson and UKIP leader Nigel Farage. UKIP do often argues that the European Union is a corrupt organisation who is most concerned of the elitists interests. Together with the British National Party they have developed a policy that argues for UK withdrawing from the EU (Abedi & Lundberg, 2009, pp. 73-75). Much of the Leave campaign in the Brexit referendum was introducing new more restrictive immigration controls to protect hospitals, welfare, housing, education, jobs, and living standards (Crisp, 2017). This is to say that the Leave campaigned was pitched as a defence of working class living standards and attributed recent declines in wages and welfare to growing immigration. Class was merged with nationalism, the protection of working class living standards required the nation to be protected. Since the majority voted for Leave, there was something in their campaign that appealed to many voters that increasingly convinced that Britain is better without the EU.

UKIP was founded in 1993 by political amateurs who were worried about Britain's membership in the EU. Some of these founders had been members of the Conservatives but felt that this party did not protect Britain's independence and wanted Britain to have an alternative (Goodwin & Milazzo, 2015, p. 2). When Labour started to change their policy, as

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<sup>4</sup> Right Wing Parties that have grown recently include: UK – UKIP, British National Party and English Defence League, Greece – Golden Dawn, France – National Front, Austria – People's Party, Germany – Alternative fur Deutschland, Netherlands – Party for Freedom, Sweden – Sweden Democrats, Norway – “Fremskrittspartiet”



they increasingly became New Labour, they lost voters in typical working class towns where UKIP often gained those votes. These voters believed that UKIP would better protect their living standards and values than what the Labour Party would now do (Goodwin & Milazzo, 2015, pp. 23-24). With the General Election in 2015, UKIP became a major party. They received a change of an extra 9.5 percent since the last election in 2010 (Goodwin & Milazzo, 2015, p. 268). The UKIP campaign was organised around the statement “take back control”. It was a simple message for why they opposed EU membership. The statement was to capture both the cultural and economic sides of the struggle against immigration (Goodwin & Milazzo, 2015, pp. 36-37). There is no doubt that this statement reached many people and provided an easy understanding for the problem of citizenship.

I found it harder to attend the UKIP meetings than those of other political parties. I sent them an email in the beginning of February, and they called me the day after to hear about what my intentions were. The man I was talking to was on the board, but he was not the leader, so he told me that he would have to ask the branch leader what he thought. I did not hear anything before the middle of March because they had been busy the last couple of months. They asked me to give more documentation, so they were sure that I was the person that I told them I was, and to make sure that I had only good intentions. When this was done I was more than welcome to join their meetings in the beginning of April. The meetings I attended with UKIP included both adults and youth as members, and there were 12-15 attendees. There were three young boys in their 20s, two older people in their early 70s, and the rest of them were from late 30s to middle of 60s. The meeting participants in the 30-40s had fulltime job, the young boys were students, and the two old men were retired. I thought that it was interesting to see such a wide age range in this group. The Left Wing meetings did not have an age range like this and it may have to do with activism and how it is perceived and embraced by different generations and for different causes. This is to say that more young people were willing to identify as Left Wing activists but more older people were willing to identify with nationalist projects of protection culturally and economically. There were three women at the meeting, and the rest of them were men. There was one couple and they aged 30-40s. The meeting was held in a pub and participants would drink beer, cola, and water. The exact same as in the Left Wing meetings. I thought it interesting to see the variations of which gender came to the political meetings I attended. In the UKIP meetings, women did attend alone, and not with their husband like in the meetings with Left Unity.

The UKIP meetings did go through a set agenda, which provided me with a chance to ask some questions. One meeting was held some weeks before the mayoral election for the Greater Manchester area, so much of the discussion was about how members should mobilize to reach potential voters. The Branch Leader had posted the result of polls on Facebook and referred to this at the meeting. He noted that UKIP had a very good poll and could do well in the election. They discussed the strategy they should have with other parties. One of participants said that the Labour Party's strategy was to pick many voters up at their home and then drive them to the polling station. Some UKIP members thought this was one reason why the Labour Party got so many votes. Participants also discussed strategies to recruit more members, especially younger members. One woman described how she had tried to organize a concert but found it difficult to find a venue. When she called different places, she got comments like: "we do not want anyone from that party to be here". This was a reaction, which I never got the impression that the Left Wing parties experienced. UKIP and Right Wing members believed they were met by scepticism and fear from people who saw them having a radical policy. At the meeting some blamed immigrants for social problems like crimes and burglaries and believed that this was a growing problem because of the immigration. Even for issues like access to the NHS. Boris Johnson for example claimed that if the UK left the EU then it would be possible to provide an extra £350 million a week for the NHS (Merrick, 2018). I know some of my interlocutors did believe this, that when they saw this number they were surprised about how much was going to the EU and how much it was possible to actually give to important welfare services. My interlocutors who voted against Brexit were shocked that someone actually did believe this because they saw the crisis in the NHS as brought on deliberately by government austerity policies rather than any shortage of government funds.

Using my ethnography, I would argue that the nationalist populism movement needs to be seen as a reaction to the neoliberal political and economic order that since the 1970s has been taking shape (Gusterson, 2017, p. 210). I found in the meetings with UKIP that the nationalistic feelings were strong and were merged with concerns over concerns about welfare cutbacks in housing, health, education and employment.

### **“We are different from Italy and France”**

Initially, when I asked people questions they did not say much, but the more I asked the more received. In the end, we started to have a huge discussion, so the leader had to say to me: “please take in mind that the answers you got is personal meanings, and not everything is what the party stands for”. They did ask me if Norway was a part of EU, and I told them that we were not, but instead a member of the European Economic Area (EEA). Further, they asked me if I knew what the main reason was for Norway not being a part of the EEA. I told them what I have heard through the news, and conversation with people, and that is because Norway is a small but rich country people were afraid that Norway would not have the same control over their economy and resources if they joined the EU. I told them that this was only rumours I heard. That I was too young when the referendum in 1994 was held to be quite sure of the reason. When I told them this they said: “There you said it! You are a rich country because you are not a part of the EU! We will be a rich country as well when we withdraw from the EU”. I asked them carefully about what I had heard and that was the EU sometimes gave money for projects that the British government probably would not fund. Then one man who was listening started to take money out of his pocket and explained to me: “If I give you 10 pounds, you will give 5 pounds back to me. That is how the EU operates, taking more money than what they give”. The increasing difficulty working class communities meet in finding employment, housing and health care are attributed not to national politicians but to the EU compromising the governmental autonomy of the UK. In doing so the EU was seen as robbing the UK and its citizens of their inherent locally produced wealth using carefully crafted disguises.

Nationalism is a strong part of the Leave campaign for Brexit voters. However, it is not only with UKIP supporters that nationalism is strong, but also the case for other interlocutors who were not politically engaged or who voted for other parties than UKIP. To return to my UKIP interlocutors, some claimed that France was getting more money from the EU to use on agriculture than what UK farmers were receiving. They thought this was unfair, and UK citizens would be better without the EU. This imagining being better off without the EU is underpinned by detailed arguments and facts that they have received from somewhere, often the mass media.

In interviews, some interlocutors sought to distance themselves from other countries that were part of the EU. One woman at the UKIP meeting argued: “We are different from Frenchmen, and Italian people. And different from the other countries in EU. That is the

reason for why we should have other deals than EU countries”. Such statements are about the uniqueness of Britain and how this was being compromised by bureaucratic entanglements and rules. Some saw themselves as not denying the global economy, but as more fully embracing it, as allowing Britain to negotiate freely with other countries outside the EU. Arguments like these are put forth by national politicians and media outlets, and they are picked up by local leaders and parties. The growing forms of popular nationalist protest against the EU and the need to affirm socio-cultural distinctiveness by people in other European Countries - like France and Greece - has made some UK citizens more willing to withdraw from the European Union.

Popular nationalism can be analysed through the work of Benedict Anderson (1991) who sees nationalism as a political ideology grounded in the imagination and its role in the construction of social-communal relations: “It is an imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (p. 6).

Anderson (1991, p. 33) argues that the mass media has a big influence when it comes to the shared imaginary relationships between citizens. It often provides their knowledge of each other, allowing them to live the same structures of temporality, time, in the shared reading and participation in a knowledge of national events. Citizens who are spatially separated and have not direct physical or social knowledge of each other can via the mass media share a knowledge of each other and of common events such as royal ceremonies, local tragedies, a national budget (Anderson, 1991, pp. 33-35). The local and the national are combined with the readers of newspapers being continually reassured that their imagined world is visibly rooted in a shared everyday life (Anderson, 1991, pp. 33-35). Ernest Gellner (1983) argues that: “It is nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way round” (p. 55). Nationalists using old cultural concepts, but they transform those concepts into their own meaning, often in a radical way (Gellner, 1983, p. 55). People with nationalist attitudes imagine differences between nations and ethnic groups to be larger than they might actually be, and therefore this engenders intolerance towards others.

Different cultural products help to get a national feeling. This is products like poetry, prose fiction, music, plastic arts, and any cultural thing that can objectify and share human feelings (Anderson, 1991, pp. 141). Different countries have different things that can symbolise and objectify what citizens see as shared defining experiences that create a unique national identity. Like in England, to wear a red poppy in the weeks prior to Remembrance

Day is a very popular thing (Molloy, 2017). It is not only worn on clothes, but also placed on cars, motor bikes or similar. According to Anderson (1991, p. 149) racism has its origins from class differences with the lower classes seen as biologically inferior to the blue-blooded aristocracy. Biological essentialism was about which class you could relate to and marry within (Arendt, 1944, p. 58). Racism and anti-Semitism have continued to manifest themselves within national boundaries and not just across them as is the case with colonialism (Anderson, 1991, pp. 149-150).

### **Donald Trump and Brexit**

Interlocutors often drew parallels between Donald Trump becoming President of the USA and the growth of the Brexit movement. This has also been discussed regularly by academics and the mass media. During the 2017 presidential election in France, it looked for a while that the far-Right presidential candidate Marie Le Penn could win the election, something that did not eventuate. Nevertheless, she increased the vote of her party from 17.2 percent in 2002, to 35 percent in 2017. So, though she lost she has really made the National Front much bigger than it ever was (Schultheis, 2017). Across the western world there have emerged new growing forms of right wing populism of which Brexit is an example. Kapferer (2017) has suggested that perhaps the way Trump campaigned was in many ways more sinister. Populism appeals to democratic sentiments, it is grounded in egalitarian values in the way it often champions the silent majority and their sufferings. The election in the USA and the referendum in the UK shows the power of new forms of egalitarian populism (Kapferer, 2017). Many of my interlocutors whether they voted for or against Brexit brought up the parallels with Trump because of the way he championed himself as the voice of poor white citizens. Those who voted against Brexit felt it was devastating that these two global events should happen in a short time from each other. Especially my younger interlocutors made it very clear that this was shocking and bad. However even my interlocutors, who voted for Brexit, sought to distance themselves partly from what was happening in America, they said things like: “in America, it is too extreme for me, it is not this extreme here”. This was with reference to problems with immigrants and how they should be handled. Those who voted for Brexit sometimes looked negatively at Trump and saw what he was doing as more extreme than what was happening in the UK. Trump in his campaign used strong racial and anti-immigrant theme to attract voters, and some looked at this as more extreme than the Leave campaign (Gusterson, 2017, p. 212). Trump wanted to build a wall between Mexico and America and

wanted to deport millions of immigrants who lacked the right paper work. The way Trump spoke decisively about migrants was part of his popularity. Trumps arrogance was something that attracted people, it was something he staged for his audience (Butler, 2017). Both the Trump Campaign and Leave campaign were racial in that they drew on strong anti-immigrant themes, which blamed migrants and their culture for crime, poverty, unemployment and lack of access to welfare. National values were important both in America and the UK. Brexit was very much about British values and the need for citizenship tests to determine who has a right to belong to the nation. Cultural differences do matter for the British people who pride themselves on their language, history, values, beliefs, customs, rituals and traditions (Hall, 2017, p. 125). National identities are being formed and transformed continually, and people's sense of Britishness was bound up with a set of moral meanings of how things should be (Hall. 2017, p. 135). What my interlocutors discussed what they saw as British values, it was often all about religion. To wear a hijab or other religious garment that was not Christian was seen as being not-British. Courtesy was also important for my interlocutors who commented on the rudeness of other migrants and their propensity to bribery. The latter was seen as undermining national standards and equal access by everyone based on merit. People should have mutual respect for each other. Perhaps it was not surprising that in the 2005 British citizenship test there was a question "What do you do if you spill someone's pint in the pub?" (BBC, 2005). Fairness and respect are positioned as British values. Democracy is also a British value. Migrants were seen as not valuing these values and therefore undermining the core of the nation. How people should act, dress and speak was important for determining if they fitted in with the nation. If people are not doing this, they are seen as "other" and people distance themselves from them.

With Brexit, Trump and the 2017 presidential election in France, one of my younger interlocutors who is pro-EU was upset. Zara summed up her thoughts about what was happening and here she uses a global perspective to understand a rising populist agenda which involves circulating misinformation as news:

So many people who voted Remain have given up and said: just look it is going to happen so going on with it. And for me I don't think that this is the right attitude. Because also Brexit, you know, you have heard the mantra. Brexit means Brexit. Because they did actually don't know what Brexit means. And actually, Brexit means Trump. It means populist agenda, it means protectionism, it means a lot of

scary things. That we see right now. Look at Le Penn and her campaign in France (she said this before the president election in France). And all the fake news being in Germany and France in their election.

Zara believes in a united Europe and a world where you can be free to travel to the places you want to without many papers. She articulates the voices of youth who see other nations as opportunities for work, education and recreation. Zara goes on to state:

Honestly, I would not go out with someone who voted for Trump. You must be really bloody stupid to vote for someone like that. I just cannot justify otherwise. I saw in the news that they spoke to a Syrian Couple who voted for him and now the family cannot go to America. It is kind of like: What were you thinking? He is full of hatred. It is nothing else but lies.

For Zara and other people, especially the young, this is an absurd situation which conflicts with their cosmopolitan attitudes and values. This is something I will discuss in the next chapter. For the time being, I would note that the cosmopolitanism of the young is related to their experiences at school, university, work, and to them mixing across racial-ethnic divides so that they form friendship, marry or have partners from other cultures. They also have strong aspirations to travel and work in other countries, to experience and share in other life styles. Difference for them is not to be assimilated but embraced as an opportunity.

# Chapter 3: The Social Class System and the Cosmopolitan Attitudes of Youth

## Introduction

The referendum produced different voting outcomes across the different generation. The younger generations were more likely to vote Remain. Of those aged 18-24 years, 73 percent voted for Remain. 62 percent of the people aged 25-34 years voted Remain as well, and the last Remain group were people aged 35-44 years where 52 percent voted Remain. Then the rate starts to go the other way and among people aged 45-54 years there were 56 percent who voted Leave, 57 percent voted Leave among people aged 55-64 years, and among people aged 65+ there were 60 percent who voted Leave (*BBC*, 2016a). The majority of my interlocutors were more than 50 years, but I do have some younger interlocutors in their 30s and in this chapter, I will focus on them and their cosmopolitan attitudes. These interlocutors are Zara, Olivia and Dominic. They are all in their early 30s and are a part of a different generation to most of my other interlocutors something that underpins them having a different attitude to the Brexit referendum. I will explore how this group viewed to English society and their future in it. As shown in the last chapter, there were parallels drawn between Brexit and the USA with Trump's rise to power. There is a growing nationalism within Britain but also forms of cultural closure that accompany demands for tighter borders to control people's movement, and this what is also worries Dominic, Olivia and Zara. Brexit would stifle their new job opportunities in Europe but also access to new cultural opportunities and to new ways of being a person. They value highly their European Union membership and identify themselves with Europe which is why the Leave win is so traumatic and emotional for them. The Brexit referendum was more than just a vote it struck at the emotional and cultural core of their identities.

Dominic had both his parents and grandparents from the Wigan Borough, and they had lived there their whole lives. Dominic had educated to become a lawyer and was almost finished with his studies when he found the work did not suit him, so he decided to drop out of studies. The main reason why he studied law was because his father was a lawyer. He felt sort of obligated to follow in his footsteps because he knew that this would make his father proud. He found part time work as a French teacher, and now he thinks that he one day will



start education to qualify as a teacher. As a lawyer and the kind routine work that he faced he did not have the feeling that he was helping anybody, but as a teacher he does, and he wants to have a more rewarding form of work where he gets this feeling.

While most of my interlocutors had backgrounds from being born in the UK, and could be described as Anglo-Saxon, two of my interlocutors - Olivia and Zara - had multicultural backgrounds. Olivia's father was in Algeria and came to the UK when he was he was going to study at the University. Her mother is English but with a mixed Italian and Irish origin. Olivia was born and raised in England, and has been living here her whole life, apart from some exchange studies. She is engaged to a man who is born in France, and they are now living together in Wigan. Olivia's highest education was a master's degree in management. In her work, she is responsible for the volunteers who undertake activities for residents who are living in elderly homes. There are many such volunteers and Olivia's work are to find these volunteers and guide them as to what they are supposed to do with the elderly.

My other interlocutor with multicultural background was Zara who is born in Israel and moved to England when she was five. The first time I met her was when we were visiting a common friend in Wigan, and this friend gave us chocolate. I told Zara that I thought there was so much good quality chocolate in England. She answered: "Yes, it is. But unfortunately, because of Brexit we will maybe lose many chocolates". I then explained to her what I was doing in England, and Zara told me that she had so many opinions and she was very interested to participate in my project. We decided to meet at a pub. Zara's father is from Israel while her mother is from England. When Zara was five years old her parents divorced, and she moved back to England with her mother. Zara's religion is Jewish. The education Zara has is a Bachelor of Science degree, but she cannot find a relevant job for it, therefore she is working with archives documents instead. This is a fulltime job with a good income. She describes the town her family moved to in England as small and a little bit "ignorant", and by that she meant they were not very open-minded people accepting of others who were socially and culturally different from them. As a person who came from another country she found it challenging to settle into this new town. From primary school and until college she found that people bullied her because she had what she called herself a "weird" background. Some kids told her to go back to from where she came. But she did not think that people were specifically anti-Semite, but more that the they wanted to harass her and show that they thought she was different from them. Zara thinks that it also could be a combination of how

she looked at how she acted, because none of her sisters had been bullied and Zara thought this was because they looked and acted more like Anglo-Celtic than what she did. When she was little she had glasses and braces, she was very interested in nature science, and was very skinny. It is this intolerance of difference that many saw as being broken down by the international contacts offered by EU membership.

My younger interlocutors had other understandings and values about British culture and Europe than my older interlocutors. I found that even within the same social class, there was a difference in how my older interlocutors and my younger interlocutors approached Brexit. In this chapter I will have a deeper look at the social class system by discussing what other academics have found in their studies and how this fits in with my own ethnography. I also discuss the cosmopolitanism attitudes of my younger interlocutors and how they were part of transformation in working class culture.

### **Social Class system**

In England, the class system is quite significant and a fundamental part of the English lifestyle. There are cultural differences emerging from ethnic background and also from participating in youth cultures that can have their relative cultural autonomy, their own values, beliefs and tastes (Bourdieu, 1995, p. 117). People are born in different places, are raised up in different settings, and this do affect which habitus people acquires (Bourdieu, 1995, p. 15). The habitus is transmitted by family background but also by the education system, with each reinforcing the other to produce the cultural capital that is important in reproducing the social class system (Bourdieu, 1995, p. 73-77). For Bourdieu (1995, pp. 204-205), differences in levels of education mirror not some much difference in actual intelligence but are a part of the social stratum, indeed education outcomes often mirror and reproduces the social order. The class divisions in society are reflected in other social divisions such as in the education system whose unequal outcomes reproduce the social world's hierarchies in a changed form. Further Bourdieu (1995, pp. 217-218) claims that taste is not personal or individual though many believe it is, but socially and culturally formed in different ways by different social groups. Others with similar taste, perceptions and judgement provide a sense of home and belonging for an individual. Tastes provide one's sense of one's place and status in the social world. The collective agreement in the negotiations between groups with contradictory interests is about

who can occupy certain positions that offer different material and symbolic rewards (Bourdieu, 1995, p. 241).

In Britain, the social class system is an important part of society and the different social classes often compete for the same resources and rights. George Orwell (1962) was travelling around Lancashire and Yorkshire in the 1930s where he saw how the class system was played out in poor housing, diet, clothing, access to water and education. When he was visiting the coal mines he was not impressed with the health and safety conditions of the workers though he was very impressed with their labour, their skills and hard work. Their work conditions and their salary were low, resulting in poor health and a short life (Orwell, 1962, pp. 19-31). Orwell (1962, p. 67) wrote that the unemployment in the England when he was travelling in the 1930s was 2 million. This number only captures how many were receiving the dole, and the actual number was actually higher because not everyone was eligible for the dole. Orwell (1962, p. 67) was told that he should multiply the official figures by three which made the unemployment rate very high. In Wigan in 1936 the population was approximately 87.000, with more than one person out of three of the whole population being unemployed (Orwell, 1962, p. 68). There was a lack of jobs, and people could look for many years without find any (Orwell, 1962, pp. 73-74). The middle class people did not believe the problem was lack of jobs, but that the working class were lazy and were not looking for work: "... 'lazy idle loafers in the dole' and saying that 'these men could all find work if they wanted to', and naturally these opinions percolated to the working class themselves" (Orwell, 1962, p. 76). Class divisions in these days was clear with the middle class looking downward on the working class even to the extent of thinking that they had the lower orders had their own vulgar accent. It was important for middle class parents to raise children with good behaviour that served to distance them from the working class. As Mary Douglas (1991) noted in her comparative ethnographic analysis of purity and pollution health and hygiene were part of the management of social distance. The British working class was associated with dirt and there were said things like: "the working class smell". Middle class children were raised to be pure and wash themselves frequently. They were told that the working class kids was dirty so they had to avoid these kids for the sake of their health and wellbeing (Orwell, 1962, p. 112).

Money provides status and is symbolised by clothing, housing, education, food and leisure preferences. As such money is often a way to divide people in terms of who people have more and who have less. The economy does affect the English social class system, but so do cultural factors. Orwell (1962, p. 107) claimed some middle class people could earn

£2000 a year, but others were as low as £300 a year (Orwell, 1962, p. 107). They hang onto their middle class status more through cultural capital. Orwell (1962) is also interested in why some working class people oppose socialism. The working class people in England were not impressed with the intellectual pretensions or the academic qualities that some socialist leaders claimed (Orwell, 1962, pp. 163-165). Socialists also has a strong believe in the virtues of industrialisation and mechanisation. The coal miners with whom Orwell spent some time were not fans of mechanisation as it was spending up the work process and threatening to displace them (Orwell, 1962, pp. 165-166). A function for mechanisation is to save work, to make machines do the work instead of people, something that means that people do not have to work. This means that only the people who are in control of the machines have work so there is a decrease in available workplaces (Orwell, 1962, pp. 172-174).

Since the 1960s academics has focused on the everyday forms that class assumes. Some have claimed that the line between the working class and middle class is blurred, and differently constituted now from what Orwell described in the 1930s (Evans & Tilly, 2015, p. 298). Some of my interlocutors could give me a clear answer as to which social class they felt they were a part of, while others were very unsure what to answer when I have asked them this question. This is also the case for other researchers. Mike Savage, Gaynor Bagnall and Brian Longhurst (2001) did a broad study in North England where they found that some men from the working class could give a clear answer they were from the working class, whilst others had a diffuse answer where they distanced themselves from the class system because they felt that they were set in a group and wanted to be individuals. The researchers found that there seemed to be some class pride associated with being from the working class (Savage, et al., 2001, p. 885). To be from the working class was not an aspect of identity that some people wanted to hide themselves from, which some other researchers have often underestimated (Savage, et al., 2001, p. 885). I found the same with my interlocutors, especially the elderly. There was no problem for some to admit that they were from the working class. But in some cases, people were more reluctant to say which class they were a part of for it was not a part of them telling their story. Even when individuals seek to deny or evade identifying with a class this only serves to reveal the ongoing importance class often plays. Class is a way to construct identity (Savage, et al., 2001, p. 888). Classes can never disappear, but they can change. One of the reasons for this is changes in the economy. There can emerge new forms of capital and occupations. There can be changes in the work force brought on by changes in geography, ethnicity, religion, etc (Evans & Tilly, 2015, p. 298, 301). Another reason for why

different for why different classes may approach class identity differently may be due to deindustrialisation. The closing down of industries such as coal mines, cotton mills and iron works left many people without a job and intensified class inequalities in certain parts of Britain. Many mid-north cities still suffer after the effects of deindustrialisation and this is part of the reason some of these traditional labours working class areas voted for Brexit and sometimes swing to the right.

Dominic, Olivia and Zara had a vague answer about what kind of class they felt they were a part of. Dominic claims that his parents as children did not grow up in rich homes with nice houses, but in families that had small houses and low incomes. He explained how they had socially climbed upwards to be a part of the lower middle-class. This was mainly due to his father who worked as a lawyer. Dominic's work situations was not ideal, working as an unqualified part-time teacher was well paid. He still lives home - at his parent's place - so as to save money, since he does not have to pay rent there. This means that he still has money to pay for the things that he needs. He is looking for full time work. In the future, he envisions that he will either stay in England to work as a French teacher or move to France to become an English teacher. Either way he has the cultural capital to become part of the lower middle class and to reproduce his parents' acquired class position.

Both Zara and Olivia told me they grew up in working class families. Zara's mom was a single mother of three children, so they did not have much money. Olivia says that her mother grew up in a working class family, but because both her parents had gained higher education she felt she had grown up in an upper working class family. Today she thinks that she is a part of the middle class because of her own higher education and the life she lives. The situation is similar for Zara, because she has acquired a university degree she thinks that she is a part of the higher working class. But she is not sure if she can say middle class because of her childhood, and thought it was necessary to take this into consideration. It is the reproduction of forms of upward social mobility that becomes problematic for some in the lower middle class-upper working class who have made some small gains. Unlike sections of the lower working class, they see their ongoing social mobility as linked to globalisation and a more cosmopolitan Britain that is part of the EU, that allows its educated citizens to work abroad.

Education becomes a highly political issue and the class-based nature of the education system -with expensive private schools and elite universities - is often openly discussed in the

UK as hindering upward social mobility and its reproduction. This is how Zara discusses the class system in Britain and its links to education:

Unfortunately, the class system is very clear in the country. I think it is because of the education system, poor education system. Each politician that comes in, each education sector that comes in want to do some stupid with it. I don't think it is enough consistency.

Owen Jones (2016, p. 11) points out something in his book *Chavs: The Demonization of The Working Class* that may emphasise Zara's argument. The financial crisis in 2007 has produced growing class inequalities, with the elite becoming wealthier whilst the poor have become even poorer due to higher unemployment, low wages, precarious employment conditions and the tightening up of access to welfare payments. In *The Guardian* there have been presenting facts for Oxfam where it is claimed: "... the richest 62 billionaires have the same amount of wealth as 3.6 billion people – the poorest half of the world's population" (De Neve & Powdthavee, 2016). De Neve & Powdthavee (2016) have found that if the people at the top gets one percent more in income then there will be an increase of 1.4 percent in national unemployment. The groups who suffer most when the rich get richer are the young people, those who are less educated and groups who has low incomes such as single mothers, the disabled, pensioners, etc (De Neve & Powdthavee, 2016). This fuels class resentment with people feeling that the government takes care of the rich people but not the poor people. 2007 is not long ago, and what happened then has remained a problem today. Brexit can be seen to be a consequence of the 2007 financial crisis. Political decisions can have an influence on class inequalities as one of the functions of government is to redistribute income-wealth through the tax and welfare system. A few years before the general election in 2010 Alan Milburn spoke on Labour's crusade to ensure: ".....'that more people get the opportunity to join the middle class'" (Jones, 2016, p. 97). Instead of improving the general conditions of the working class, the politicians try to shape the working class people in to the be a part of the middle class. Attitudes like this get an impression of that to be a part of working class does not give a good status in the community (Jones, 2016, p. 97).

Class inequalities do not just exist by themselves but also interact with other systems of difference-inequalities such as gender, race-ethnicity and generational differences. Today a

great deal of unemployment and poverty throughout Europe has hit working class youth. In the UK today, there are 525,000 young people aged 16-24 who were officially listed as unemployed in December 2017-February 2018 (UK Parliament, 2018). There is less unemployment among upper working class and lower middle class youth. This was especially so for my young interlocutors who had a very strong feeling of European identity and looked to the EU for employment, prosperity, travel and social-cultural relations. In the next paragraph I will focus how my young interlocutors related to other European Countries.

### **Feeling as a part of Europe**

There is counterbalanced by opponents who identify more with other European countries: they regard Britain as very similar to other European countries and believe the UK will benefit more by staying in the EU. My younger interlocutors had these opinions and familiarised themselves as much with people from other European countries as they did with people from Britain. They developed more cosmopolitan attitudes that advocated the reciprocal transnational flow of people, goods and culture across national boundaries (Kurasawa, 2004, p. 234). As cosmopolitan individuals they understood themselves as universal subjects, and as a part of the citizens world and not just national citizens which they saw relevant but also as limiting. They advocate feelings of connection and belonging with other individuals in the world (Kurasawa, 2004, p. 236). My younger interlocutors felt a connection and identified themselves with citizens from Italy, France, Romania, Poland and so on. Such cosmopolitan attitudes unite local, national and global identities, and produce an experimentation in the different aspects of global diversity that people embrace, identify with and bring together as one (Kurasawa, 2004, p. 240). People with cosmopolitan attitudes want to embrace and respect difference and multiculturalism (Turner, 2002, p. 56). The contemporary cosmopolitanism we are seeing today may be a response to the growing racism which has emerged in modern epoch (Turner, 2002, p. 55). It is also like that contemporary racism and nationalism is a response to growing forms of cosmopolitanism and globalisation, this growing racism and cultural intolerance is one of the things that Olivia is especially concerned about, when she claimed that she was shocked by all the racism and had no clue that UK was such a racist country. She cannot understand people who blame immigration for social problems because she does not think that immigration is as bad as people claim. Globalization is important for the people who identify with cosmopolitanism and therefore it is important for them to fight for the rights as EU citizens. Dominic, Zara and Olivia see the

participation of the EU in the global economy as giving UK citizens huge advantages. They are also concerned about language because English is a global language and they recognise their English fluency gives them some advantage in employment in other EU countries. Dominic identifies cosmopolitanism partly with cultural diversity as evidenced in speaking many languages. For him, this skill is a practical means of getting more employment, but Dominic also has a love of languages and for him this is part of his love for cultural diversity. For this reason, he supports freer movement across cultural borders, for not restricting the movement of culture to national borders:

I think that it is absolutely possible that we will be more isolated. Because maybe this idea will start to creep into peoples' mind. That we are separate. And that we do not need to be a part of it. So clearly, with being a part of the European organization, it helps if you have languages and absolutely want to go to different countries to learn. Yes, there is a possibility that people will be discouraged and will see that there is less of a need to speak languages. Cause the main reason people, I think, the main reason we learn languages in this country is because we enjoy them. Not because we need to. Because we do not need to learn different languages in terms of our career and possibilities. However other countries do need to learn the language (meaning English). Like yourself (he means since I am from Norway), need to learn the language because it is the dominant world language. So, what that means is that people do not tend to study them (other languages) here in the UK. But people like me enjoy them, I really enjoy speaking languages. So yeah, I think sadly that if we leave the EU we will always be translated into other terms.

For Dominic, to leave the EU is to cause the UK to lose one of the strongest bonds they have to other nationalities. When the British people do not have to speak other languages, he thinks this will make them even more distanced from other countries. They will become narrower and less cosmopolitan. This distance and isolation is something that Zara also fears. The misinformation about the power of the EU versus national decision-making power also makes her angry:



Undoubtedly. I think that you can obviously still travel and still go to different places. But the possibilities, the opportunities, are much more restricted now. It is not so easy as when we are in the EU to go over and work to Paris, Berlin, whatever. It is visa implications, more bureaucracy. Do not get me wrong, the European Union has its issues and I recognize they have their problems. I am not kind of blind to that. But the benefits, the positives far out way the negatives. Far better to be in the EU than be a part of the decision making outside of it. People use the argument that the EU are deciding. It is not undermined at all. We can veto any decision. Still make our own laws if we want to. It is just lies. It makes me angry more than anything.

She also believed that if the UK left the EU that it was important that there be allowed the possibility for dual citizenship, so as that some can maintain their EU citizenship:

I just hope that in the negotiations some people can manage to keep it, I know that it is on the table to keep your EU citizenship for some people. I would pay to keep it, I would pay to have my EU citizenship. That is how much I love it. But I do not think that the Tories would agree to that.

It is growing national closure that Zara identifies with growing conservative politics and policies. To be willing to pay for EU citizenship shows how much it means for Zara to be a part of something bigger than the nation. It means having the opportunity to travel across national borders, work in other places, marry whoever she wants irrespective of their ethnicity, have close friends and visitors from all over Europe, and so on. The freedom to do what she wants is quite important to her and part of her sense of individuality and identity.

In Dominic's family most of the people voted Remain, but his grandmother did vote Leave. She was born in Wigan and grew up in a working class family and had grammar school as her highest education. Throughout her work life she had mostly some small jobs here and there, because she was mainly at home with her children. Dominic believes that his grandmother voted Leave because she did not really understand what the European Union was about. Dominic has been to France where he worked for one year and explained to me how he got this chance because of the free movement of people and labour. He explained this to his grandmother after the referendum, and she then felt guilty about having voting Leave. He told

me that his grandmother had not been thinking about these issues. The free movement of UK citizens into other EU countries was not a relevant issue for Dominic's grandmother, who like others was more concerned with the free movement of foreigners into the UK.

Dominic's grandmother travelled only domestically within UK - and that is partly why she had not been concerned with international travel considerations. It is a certain internationalisation of movement, culture and identity which can be seen in the different voting patterns of Dominic versus his grandmother and the aged bases nature those difference this can assume.

Dominic believes that because he has studied European law he has good knowledge and understanding of what the EU is, and how valuable it is for the UK to stay in the EU. Part of his reason for embracing the EU is also political, for he identifies more with international socialist causes rather than nationalism, and indeed the latter in its perceived growing right wing forms frightens him. The free movement of goods and labour for him is part of breaking down nationalist boundaries so individuals can identify themselves in new ways. Freedom for him requires free movement of people and goods and this in turn creates new communities. Free movement shapes the kind of information people receives and this determines how people are thinking and what decisions they are going to make, like in the referendum. Dominic explained to me the importance of what he learned when he was studying European law:

The main reason simply: I really believe in the organization, in the European Union. I studied European Law and I studied Europe, and how that composed it at the University. And I like to think that I have a good basic understanding of what the European Union is. And the rights that it has. For example, the right of the free movement of people. The rights to free movement of goods. But I think that the main reason I voted remain is because of the reason that at the heart I am a socialist. I am left on the political spectre. So, it is more the idea of belonging to a union of countries. And being together and be available to work and trade together. To improve each other in a collective way. That is the reason why, the main reason, I voted was that to be together, to be a part of a community I believe in.

It is important to note that many of the Remain voters were socialists and come from Left-Labour parties and working class communities, but not all. What is important is how the Leave campaign has increasingly identified socialist causes with nationalism, creating new forms of national socialism, a new kind of right wing populism that incorporates traditional left concerns. The concerns with national borders, culture, and racial identity have often been working class concerns but this is now being reinvented and rejuvenated around the problem of EU membership. Many in the working class have moved away from the international forms of socialism which Dominic identifies and celebrates. There is a difference between the international forms of socialism and the national forms of socialism, where the latter is often called fascist. Orwell (1962, pp. 150-151) was worried about the political successes of fascist parties throughout Europe in the 1930s. He claims that many working class UK citizens he met believed they were socialists but were also fascists (Orwell, 1962, p. 186). Orwell (1962, p. 202) thought that it was difficult to save England from fascism because the socialist parties were not strong or popular enough. Indeed, he was interested in working class suspicion of socialist leaders. Even though many Brexit supporters may not have been fascist, the Labour supporters who advocated the Leave campaign often leaned towards nationalism socialism or at least towards new forms of right wing populism that advocated tighter national borders, stricter welfare controls for immigrants, and a reassertion of English language, culture and tradition.

In this chapter much have documented and analysed how the younger generation can often embrace and identify with more cosmopolitan attitudes that are often anti-nationalistic and against growing Right Wing populism. Such attitudes tend to be stronger are among the higher sections of the working class and lower middle classes who have opportunities and aspirations to work, travel and socialise overseas. I have outlined how social class differences are realised in different generations and their cultural attitudes. One of the things that has an impact on class experiences, tensions and inequalities system is the welfare system, and in the next chapter I will examine how the current welfare system works in everyday life and how it has been influenced by neo-liberal objectives.

## Chapter 4: Charity and the Welfare State

### Introduction

In England the giving and receiving of charity is quite common, especially in largely working class towns like Wigan. In England and Wales, there are 165.000 registered charities (Fiennes, 2017). During the time I was in Wigan I went to a small charity shop that also functioned as a café. It was more than a coffee shop serving coffee, tea and cake since it also served modest lunches and dinner. It was not as nice as a plush restaurant, but more what is sometimes called a diner or small bistro. Given the café was a charity shop, the customers could decide how much they could pay. It was also partly up to the discretion of the person on the cash register how much individuals paid and he or she generally decided on the basis of appearances. I did not speak to these café customers, but I was told by the leader of the charityshop that customers who visited this store were usually individuals who did not have a full-time job and had only a small amount of money. In the café, they could eat food for a very low price. When I went to the coffee shop it was around noon. I did not see anyone bring their children, probably because the children were at school. The shop was near a secondary school so some of the students from this school did go there to eat their lunches. The coffee shop was a good example of how successful charity works in England, providing the homeless, those on welfare, but also sections of the working class with good food for a low price. Given the hours that the shop is open, it could not be readily accessed by those who worked on low wages and fulltime.

There is an internet site where it is possible to register as a possible volunteer for different charity organizations. This is how I found the charity shop where I ended up working as a volunteer for five months. The shop is located in a building made of brown bricks, like nearly all the buildings in Wigan. The shop is located close to a china restaurant. The Shop sells mainly furniture, but also some home decoration.<sup>5</sup> The main agenda for the shop is to sell used things that have been donated, however the shop does also sell some brand-new things. These are sold so the shop has more to offer customers and has a higher turnover to cover costs. People can bring their old stuff directly to the shop. Different types of people donate things, but it is especially older people who own a lot of stuff that they are not

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<sup>5</sup> Nearby, there is another store of the same chain-brand that sells brick-a-brack but also clothes.

using anymore, because of physical or health reasons or because their family no longer lives with them. When people buy things from the shop they can get it delivered for a fee. When the drivers bring items to customers they can often bring back old things to the shop that are later sold. The shop has three levels. In the basement, there is the brand-new stock. The main door is on the ground floor. The till, phone and desk, along with used living-room items and electrical appliances is located here. In one small section, there is a small room where they test all the electrical stuff to see if it is safe to sell. On the second floor are items for furnishing an office, bedroom or kitchen. The shop also has its own toilets and a lunch room. It does not have an elevator. All stock items therefore need to be lifted up and down the stairs. The shop is open seven days a week, from Monday to Saturday 9.30 – 17.00 and on Sunday, from 10.00 – 16.00.

When it comes to prices in the shop, people who were working in the shop priced the items. They have a price guide that they need to follow for every item. If it is worn and with many marks, it is another price than if it is in good condition. It also depends on the brand because good brands should be priced higher than low or no-name brands. Staff will use e-bay to see what they should price things for in the shop<sup>6</sup>. Items that arrive each week have their own week number written on the item as it arrives in the shop. When items have been in the shop for approximately three weeks they are marked down. After four to five weeks those remaining items will be removed. Usually they are sent to another shop in the same charity organisation.

In the shop, there are four distinct groups who work: the first is the paid staff who consist of six people who work fulltime and get a salary. The second group is people from college or secondary school who have work experience as part of their education. The third group are people who volunteer, they have chosen to be in the shop for various reasons, ranging from altruism, something to do, a way of meeting people, etc. The last group are the unpaid staff. These people receive welfare money, either because they have a physical condition and are not capable of paid work, or because they are sent from the job centre and gaining work experience whilst they look for another job. These people do not get paid by the shop, but they do continue to receive their welfare payments from the job centre. Individuals up to 24 years get around £57.90 each week, and those aged more than 25 years get around £73.10 each week (Gov.UK, 2018). This can vary somewhat, if they have children, are

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<sup>6</sup>The shop are also selling things on E-bay

married, or have disabilities. For people who had been working for years and then suddenly didn't had job anymore there was a big decrease in their income. They had to change their daily routines so as to make money go further.

The age of the paid staff ranged from 40-60 years. For people who were doing volunteer work they were between 25-76 years. The school kids were from 14-17, both from secondary school and college. The age of the people from the job centre ranged from 18-60 years. Some of the people from the job centre had just finished college and were looking for their first job, but it was not easy for them to get into the work market. Some of the young volunteers at the shop had previously been working for a few years but they now needed to search for a new job. In their previous fulltime job, some had been employed only temporarily, for a certain period. Some had lost their jobs because of cutbacks, whilst others were tired of their last job and wanted a more promising job with higher salaries, hours, conditions, or promotional prospects. In general, young people needed to present themselves to prospective employers as highly motivated with a work ethic and charity work, working for nothing, for the good of others and for the love of work, was an ideal way of doing that. Through the time I was in the shop there was only one person with another ethnicity than English. This was an African man. He had been in England for one year. But he found a job not long after I started in the shop, so I did not get to know him.

It is difficult to estimate the total number of people who worked in the shop during my stay, since some of them were only there for a short period, and some did not work on the shop floor but in the warehouse. Both on the shop floor and in the warehouse, I estimate there was usually an average of 20 people working each week. Some who had been sent from the job centre decided to continue to do volunteer work even after they had finished their compulsory time. One of the managers told me that there were many more people working in the shop before than now. This was because job centre was not sending as many people to the shop. He thought this might be because they were sending people to do other things, like job searching courses. However, I heard some unpaid workers gossiping that the shop had a bad reputation because the paid staff were too hard with the volunteers and those sent by the job centre if they did not do a good enough job. It was suspected that some had informed the job centre about this or people had heard rumours and asked the job centre if they could work at another place. Another reason was that there was less chance of getting permanent work afterwards than in the case of work experience at a large food or supermarket chain like McDonalds, Sainsbury, Tesco, Asda, Subway, and so on.

The inter-relationship between charity, work and welfare has a long history in Britain and has been a changing relationship that is continuously being experimented with. Social scientists like Mitchell Dean, Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller have been inspired by Michel Foucault and his writings about the state, government, and welfare. I will use some of their analyses to discuss how the receiving of welfare is working in contemporary Britain. Thereafter, I will focus on my interlocutors, starting with Hugh and his attitude towards receiving welfare money. Later, I will discuss lunch breaks at the shop and what people spoke about, and what they did eat. I will also speak about class distinctions and the role of dirt, hygiene and smell in mediating and creating the embodied nature of class relations in Britain. Here I will rely on the theoretical work of Bourdieu (1995) and Mary Douglas (1991) but also George Orwell (1962) subtle analysis of the culture of class relations in Britain which drew on his time in Wigan. Thereafter, I will introduce the volunteer Noreen so as to explore further notions of voluntary work. At the end of the chapter, I will discuss customers and how those who worked in the shop approached them in different ways depending on who the customer was.

### **Receiving welfare**

The Department of Work and Pensions (2017) published statistic for May 2017 where it was stated that 20 million people in the UK were benefit claimants. 13million of this was pensions, and 6.8 million was for those of working age. 460.000 received a jobseeker's allowance. In terms of welfare expenditure government of both political persuasion, Labour and Conservative have tried to find a way for welfare expenditure to be more efficient and cheaper. The state sought to incorporate the private sector - private charity organisations but also businesses - into the welfare state to work in a way that the state could reduce its own direct involvement. Different social scientists have argued that has to do with the rise of the neoliberal state, which has reformulated the way government relates to its citizens (Dean, 2010a, Dean, 2010b: Rose & Miller, 1992: Rose, 2006). The structure and management of national employment services has been in change in Europe, so as to develop new forms that might function better and more efficient for the government. These changes occurred alongside the growth in long-term unemployment and new forms of social exclusion grounded in race and ethnicity (Finn, 2000, p. 44). Many governments are institutionalizing requirements that people of working age who receive benefits should take jobs if they are in a condition where they are able to work (Finn, 2000, p. 53). Initiatives from the government

have been made so as to decrease unemployment in Western countries like The United States of America, Australia and England. There was rising unemployment and the initiatives were often designed to get people off welfare payments rather than reduce the actual number unemployed (McDonald & Marston, 2005, p. 375). In England they made a program called the New Deal to manage the problem of unemployment using the active citizenship discourse. Here welfare recipients were defined as passive receivers who had to be made to earn their right to welfare as good citizens of the nation. This was initiated by the New Labour government (McDonald & Marston, 2005, p. 375). There have been many changes in how to organize the welfare state from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There is increasingly occurring a transfer of the social and economic risks of unemployment from state bureaucracies to that of placing more responsibility on the individual together with their case manager (McDonald & Marston, 2005, pp. 375-376). The government have through the years been most concerned about how to get people off welfare payment and not so much about getting them off unemployment. The most important issue for the government was to save money and not so much that the citizens should have a full-time work to go to. This transformation in the British welfare state was captured in the popular movie *I Daniel Blake* (O'Brien & Loach, 2016). It dramatized what many critics of welfare reform had been claiming, in the press and in academic articles. It documents in small detail how many people may have struggled with the new bureaucratic rules, and how the new system often worked against people instead of operating for their welfare (O'Brien & Loach, 2016). My interlocutors did not mention this movie particularly, but they did often mention how they thought that they themselves and people they knew were being thrown around in a haphazard way by the rules of the welfare system. Unpaid-workers at the charity shop told me that it sometimes could be complicated to get access to welfare money because there were so many forms to fill out and obligations to meet before they could receive welfare money. The workfare in UK are often discussed because the government says that the young people needs to undertake work, or they risk losing their benefits. They are sent to supermarkets and budget stores and got no pay even though they are forced to work, and there is no guarantee of a work (Malik, 2011). However, the people who is sent to do unpaid work in these stores, are not receiving any money and needs to be available from 9am to 10pm (Malik, 2011).

New Deals was an ideological statement where the idea was to reduce the gaps between the richest people and the poorest people (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2015, p. 6). This was its goal, its ideological legitimising framework, which has



been analysed and critiqued by many critics who see it as part of the neo-liberal reworking of the state where the state increasingly makes individuals economically responsible for themselves. The newly made relationship between liberalism and the authorities is the focus of scholars like Nikolas Rose (2006: Rose & Miller, 1992) and Mitchell Dean (2010a: 2010b). These researchers use Michel Foucault's theories about power as grounded in growing forms of individualism to outline how these new welfare programs function in the area between the government and citizens. Dean (2010a, p. 41) argues that Foucault thinks that it is best not to focus on the state or government but to think about technologies for governing individuals and often through individualising them. With neoliberalism there have been more policies of privatization, with government functions moving into the hands of private agents such as charities and corporations (Rose & Miller, 1992, p. 200). Money, goods and profits are a central part of neoliberalism, but it also seeks to spend as little as possible whilst earning as much as possible in terms of realising all kinds of goals, such as increased job placements and producing motivated subjects who seek to work for their love of work (Dean, 2010b, p. 462). There has been a discussion through the years if it is the best way to governing too much or too little, and the answer is that it should be governed somewhere in between to not get any sort of crisis (Dean, 2010b, p. 463). To reduce the gap between the rich and poor is not the aim of neoliberal politicians who argue that it is not sustainable to take money from rich people to give to the poor. Instead, Thatcher thought that the poor must be made capable of generating their own extra income, this was something that Margaret Thatcher was concerned about and used as argument when she was explaining why she did not give more to the poor people (Dorey, 2015, pp. 80-81). Thatcher argued that poverty and being poor was because of the choices individuals had taken and not because of the provisions that the government are making (Dorey, 2015, p. 82).

It is necessary to analyse not just whether power is good or bad for individuals, and especially poor people, but also focus on how new forms of power engage them. Increasingly, market understandings of value, market ways of organising social relationships are being applied to the relationship between state and its citizen, between government agencies and welfare recipients. Nikolas Rose & Peter Miller (1992, p. 199) argue that neoliberalism needs to be seen as reorganizing the technologies of power within government. Its new political reforms reformulate the relationship between the formal institutions of the state and the social actors within it. The government and nation states do have a sovereign power over making guidelines for people and how they are going to interact to make their life (Dean, 2010a, p.

56). There are different kinds of power and it is made up in different kinds of entities. One of the types of power that has grown in the modern world are new forms of discipline (Dean, 2010b, p. 472). One way to make people more disciplined is to get people to engage in work but also to look for work. It is necessary to understand that power also lies in the new rules and requirements to be motivated to work that the government imposes administratively on welfare recipients (Dean, 2010b, p. 472). This power is used to create citizens who have a kind of regulated freedom, who need to freely demonstrate that they are capable of self-discipline, of disciplining themselves to work or to look continuously and diligently for work (Rose & Miller, 1992, p. 174). In this way, the government do have a certain power to decide the way people should deal with their life, to show that they are good citizens who freely control their motivations and everyday disciplinary routines.

There might be different reasons for why people need to receive welfare money, and for some there is health issues, bad habits, or lack of job opportunities. The government has introduced different programs to reduce the welfare money, especially there has been many programs to reduce the number of those who receive money because of health issues (Rose & Miller, 1992, p. 194). When people first has started to receive welfare, there is a risk to become welfare dependent (Dean, 2010a, p. 47: Dean, 1998: Dean, 1995: see also Theodore & Peck, 1999, p. 486). People who receive job allowance money, needs to attend work training programs, applying for a certain number of jobs each week, going to interviews by welfare agencies, and taking up unpaid work at various business such as the charity shop that I studied (Dean, 2010a, p. 46). When the government do changes the welfare state this makes more pressure on people receiving welfare and pushing them to be active welfare recipients who starts to apply for numerous job applications each week even if there were no or only very few jobs (Dean, 2010a). People who is temporarily unemployed and need social welfare are seen to be in moral-cultural danger and require assistance to become morally and culturally healthier citizens (Dean, 2010a). Job centre will do their best to help people with making new habits who will fit into a work life. The job centre is helping people on job allowance to find jobs, either temporary or even a voluntary job. This gives people job skills and demonstrate the requisite motivational skills to employers but also to welfare agencies and their case managers (Dean, 2010a). New forms of welfare policing have been developed that have increased the use of mentoring and the need to give evidence of searching for a job, with sanctions being applied to those who fail to meet these new obligations (Dean, 2010a, p. 47). Fulfilling these administrative rules and obligations demonstrates shows employers that

the individuals have an aim in their life (Dean, 2010a). People who are welfare dependent in contemporary liberal democracies need to demonstrate forms of self-governance, that is self-discipline, they need to work upon themselves, craft their subjective dispositions in a certain way and this includes their motivations, aspirations, habits, beliefs and values (Dean, 2010a, p. 47; Rose, 2006, pp. 158-159, Rose & Miller, 1992). In this way the individuals are being governed through new forms of welfare (Dean, 2010a).

When I was in the shop, I started to learn how an English workplace operates and how this was changing. The government-run job centre is the place where unemployed people need to go to get access to welfare money. Increasingly authorities are demanding and sending people out to do work for a certain period as a condition of getting access to welfare. This includes unpaid work at McDonalds, Subway or some other take-away food restaurant, various supermarkets, different charity shops, Subway or even a grocery store. The charity shop was one of those work places that had now become part of the welfare state. People with physical conditions (or other challenges), who were not able to have a paid job got welfare money and softer requirements where they could be in the shop as much as they felt was possible for them. For this group it provided an opportunity to socialise with other people and to feel a valuable part of the community. One of them was in the shop every day except from Sundays. He was working when the shop first opened until the shop closed and he told me he spent so much time in the shop because he enjoyed it as he liked to keep busy instead of sitting home and looking into the wall. The shop was a meaningful place to spend time, where he could socialise with people whom he otherwise would not meet.

People who were sent from the job centre had to do the fixed number of hours that the job centre had decided. The average number of weeks the job centre required was six, but this could vary. Even though people were sent to the shop, they still had regularly meetings with the job centre, which part of increased practices of surveillance and accountability of welfare recipients. I often witness individuals telling the boss that they had to go because they had a meeting with the job centre. Sometimes the job centre could suddenly decide to send an individual to another shop that was short of staff or busy. This happened to one of female unpaid worker whilst I was there. I heard the staff saying she was transferred to another shop in the same brand that was further away. The job centre could send the unemployed to places that were a maximum of 1,5 hours in travel time one way. The manager in the shop took on the task of preparing his job centre people for real working life. I got the impression that it was not always something he was required to do, but he did it to be helpful to the welfare

agencies and welfare recipients. He felt obligated to do so but also empowered by doing so. People from the job centre told me that it was difficult to find a decent job with good income, often there was only part time where they were offered work for three days in a week or for just the busy period of time during the day. Such work did not cover everything they had to pay. One of the paid staff told me that they had never got any training in how to handle either the unpaid staff, the volunteers, or the school kids in the shop. That was something she was missing because this had become a very big important aspect of everyday life in the shop. She thought it would be better for the shop, customers, and other workers in the shop if the paid staff had some courses in how to handle the new welfare recruits. I found that both the unpaid staff and the volunteers had a great deal of respect for the managers in the shop. The unpaid staff needed to show respect for the manager for this was an important part of preparing them for working life, it showed that they knew how to take directions and advice. It demonstrated to everyone that they were taking the work training serious.

Many of my interlocutors complained about immigrants who were coming into the country and living on welfare money because they did not have a job. More importantly, the immigrants were often unfairly accused of not being motivated to look for a job. Many British people also received welfare money, and some of them have attitudes where they have told me that they did not stress to find a job. They saw themselves as more entitled to welfare and though they were willing to acknowledge exceptions saw themselves as more motivated to seek a job. Much of the mass media was focused on welfare recipients from eastern Europe who were seen as not seeking employment and were just in Britain to milk the welfare state. I want to turn to one of my interlocutors Hugh as a British welfare recipient.

### **The story about Hugh**

Hugh is a single man in his 40s without children, born and raised in Wigan. He sees himself to be a part of a working-class family because he and both of his parents have college as their highest education level. He had volunteered in the shop earlier and asked the job centre to send him to the shop again because he enjoyed it last time. When he had completed the required hours that the job centre had instructed him to do he continued to do extra hours as voluntary work. His motivation for doing this was that he enjoyed working in the shop, and it looked good on his CV. Erving Goffman (1990) are in his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* writing about how people act when they are meeting other people. In doing

voluntary work Hugh is to market himself as motivated and disciplined and this is important since his potentially future employer will seek to acquire information about him to see if he is a person that could do a good work for them (Goffman, 1990, p. 13). He was doing something socially valuable with his spare time and was showing his potential to future employers that he has engaged in something where he does not get paid in money but instead values getting experience and above all values working, and this made his presentation for future employers better since this was a kind of doing an impression management (Goffman, 1990, p. 231).

Hugh has finished college but has never taken any more education than that. He was interested in doing some further higher education, especially something involving music, but then he knew that he probably had to move from Wigan, and that is something that he do not want to do. He believes it would be hard to find a job in the music industry and it is costly to take on higher education in terms of tuition fees. When Hugh was 17 he played in a band and thought at the time that he would be doing this for the rest of his life. Therefore, he did not concern or invest himself too much in education. He has thought about becoming a teacher and believes that would allow him to continue living in Wigan Borough. He is committed to being part of the working class community culture in Wigan. This is a loyalty that often are seen in sports like football and rugby as well, where people are very loyal when it comes to supporting their teams. George Orwell (1962, pp. 45-66) noted some of the resistance to welfare housing because of its fragmenting effects when it moved families and individuals out of the inner-city slums and into new housing estates on the outskirts of the city. Orwell (1962) further discusses working class loyalty to local communal areas in Wigan, and how people preferred to live there despite the poverty and poor housing. I ran into similar attitudes not just with Hugh, but also with other interlocutors. Many of them who were born and raised in Wigan had a strong loyalty to their town, saying many good things about it and how they were proud Wiganer's.

Hugh and I also discussed political issues. He was not politically active himself, but he liked to follow what was happening in the politics. Personally, Hugh thinks that Tories politic is not helpful for the working class because he believes they mainly want to do what is best for elites. Labour is, according to Hugh, the best option for working class people. He described to me some of the political disagreements in the shop, how staff had different opinions about which parties was doing most for the working class. Discussing politics with the other people in the shop was something he tried to avoid, since they were seeing each other almost every day and he wanted to avoid ill-feelings. He told me how in the Brexit

election he voted Remain because he see himself as more European than just English and shared many of the same values as my interlocutors in the last chapter. To withdraw from the Union is in his eyes wrong because Britain is a part of Europe and needs to cooperate with other European countries.

Hugh told me that he did not stress to find a job. He was more concerned to find permanent employment that he would enjoy. Many of my interlocutors complained that many of the immigrants were taking the welfare money and this was the reason for why they were having difficulties accessing welfare payments, housing and medical services. Whilst there are some complaints in newspapers about British-born welfare recipients who have the same attitudes as Hugh, these criticisms are not as frequent or as intense as those directed towards newly arrived migrants. British-born citizens are seen to have more right to welfare and to the freedom to decide what job they should and could do. If Hugh had been an immigrant there would be less tolerance of his work attitude. The British press is divided between Right Wings newspaper like the *Daily Mail* which claims that it costs Britain a great deal of taxation money to have immigrants in the country, and Left Wing papers which argue that Britain gains money instead of losing money through having immigrants in the country (Travis, 2014). The protection of the welfare state against immigrants is a part of Right Wing nationalism in the UK but also throughout Europe including Norway.

What people read and hear is important for the kind of knowledge that they have about the world around them. Following a video at the *BBC* (2016b) it must also be said that it was not only the British people who were frustrated over immigrants coming into the country, but also some immigrants who had already lived in the UK for some time and who also voted for Brexit. They claimed that there were harder times now, and with more and more people coming into the country it was hard for their children to get a job. Established immigrants believed they had arrived in the country first and had to work hard when they first came in, but that foreigners who came now were getting everything automatically and too easily. It is not just whites against the rest, there are also divisions between immigrant groups, with some from British commonwealth colonies seeing themselves as having more rights than those from East European, Asian, and non-commonwealth African nations (*BBC*, 2016b). Whilst British people wanted to protect the British, those from the Commonwealth sought to protect its existence and to some extent regarded the EU as diluting that Commonwealth identity. Long established immigrants who had become national citizens sought to protect their rights to the nation (Bulman, 2017). Even though these immigrants had experienced tough times and

marginalisation like recent migrants, they seem to have forgotten this or more accurately did not use it as a ground for empathy with new migrants.

The economic situation for many of the working class in the de-industrialised north and midlands is not good. This leads many to believe that the UK should withdraw from the EU. By being at the shop, sitting in the lunch room and talking to people I saw the everyday life of the working class and the small amount of money they had available. They were eating bad lunches, cheap and often of poor nutritional value - high in sugar, fat and carbohydrates. I was also often uncomfortable when I was close to some individuals, because I found that some of them had a strong personal odour or a bad smell. I do not just want to dismiss that as the personal idiosyncrasies of individuals, their poor personal hygiene, but follow George Orwell in exploring how it is part of the class divisions and antagonisms in British society. The social and cultural nature of purity and pollution was also something that concerned Mary Douglas and I will discuss both these authors in next section.

### **Purity, and lunch breaks**

When I was in the shop I was thinking about all the different smells that were there, and what other people smelled like. Care for hygiene and respect for conventions are the two most fundamental things when talking about the idea of dirt (Douglas, 1991, p. 7). The ideas we have of dirt express symbolic systems and the difference between pollution behaviour in one part of the world and another are also a matter of detail (Douglas, 1991, p. 35). Dirt is integral to the creation of social order, to the creation of social differences and hierarchies. Revulsion is not just physical but a cultural and social formulation of embodiment (Douglas, 1991). Many parts of the shop had not special smell about them and I was quite comfortable to move into them. But quite often in the lunch room I did not like the smell. It was partly that people were cooking certain things, I found especially the smell of the pot noodles to be bad. Cheap noodles provided a hot affordable meal for many of the staff who could not afford to buy or make sandwiches or bring other kinds of lunch. Some customers and some of the volunteers also had a bad smell. It was strong body odour, like they had not had shower for a while. Surprisingly, I never heard anyone complain about the smell. This could be the case of two reasons, the first one is that they did not think of it or notice it because they were used to these smells. Second, they noticed it, but out of courtesy they did never mentioned it because the norms say that it is not nice to comment on this. Smell may say something about the resources

that people have available. Hygiene articles like soap, deodorant and even hot water cost money. By taking a shower or washing clothes, apart from access to hot water, people might want some heating when they come out of the shower on cold mornings. Such heating of water and houses is something the poor will sometimes economise on. Historically, Wigan was also a coal mining area where access to water in the houses of the poor was very limited and mostly non-existent even during the time when Orwell was writing in the 1930s (Orwell, 1962, p. 32). Even today, people with little money have limited access to affordable housing with shared and easily accessible bathroom and laundry facilities. Many also have other priorities for spending their money such as rent, electricity, gas, etc. In Douglas' (1991, p. 121) comparative analysis of who is regarded as clean and dirty, Douglas's main point is that the body is mirroring the social situations that people are in the social status. Purity is a part of people's everyday conditions, how pure people are regarded says something about power relations, caste hierarchies, gender inequalities, clan differences and, in Wigan, class distinctions (Douglas, 1991, p. 161). Everyday showers are often not part of people's everyday habits, and one of the effects of this is to distinguish the working class from the middle class which does embrace and police stricter codes of cleanliness and hygiene. In Britain, the smell of the working class is legendary, and they are sometimes referred to as "The great unwashed". For many middle class people, this part of their gossip and what helps to create and produce what Bourdieu (1995) calls class distinctions. As mentioned earlier, cleanliness and personal hygiene are part of the way that the middle class distance themselves from the working class and how they make themselves comfortable and at home with each other (Orwell, 1962, p. 110-115). This is a part of the social distancing of the classes from each other, with the lower class being seen as dirty and the upper class as pure. Here class distinctions are quite personal and visceral, they are embodied.

In the lunch room, there was a closet where people could leave their stuff whilst they were working. Every day when staff arrived they received a key with a number on where they could put their valuable stuff. The lunch room was small, and cold. In the room, there was cutlery, pots and plates to make lunch: there was also a fridge, sink, microwave and tea-maker. It was a cold room, the only heating system they had was a heating lamp. The paid staff decided between themselves when they wanted to have their break, and their lunches lasted for 30 minutes. Volunteers and unpaid staff could decide when they wanted to go for their break, but sometime the paid staff did organize their breaks, so as to be sure there were enough people in the store all the time. Most of the volunteers had 30 minutes breaks, even



though volunteers could decide how long their breaks might be. The unpaid staff had to take 30 minutes, so as to get used to the routine of real working life. In the break, some people went outside the store, like to a coffee shop. Those who had their break in the lunch room often listened to music with their earphones or read newspapers. People would also talk about various topics like where they had been on holiday, or where they were going on their next holiday, what they were doing on the weekend, or in the afternoon. The older women might talk about their husbands, children, and grandchildren. The weather was often discussed. Frequently, they would also talk about the shop, and the people in the shop. They would gossip about the managers, customers, or other people who were out on the shop floor. I also used the occasion to talk to them and tell them what I was doing in England.

What people had for their lunch varied. Some people did bring their own lunch, and some usually bought lunch. When they brought their own lunch, it could be left-overs from yesterday's dinner, or a homemade sandwich, or pot noodles. Many ate a small bag of crisps when they were finished with their lunch, whilst others ate some chocolate. Those who went out to buy their lunch, could go to different places such a supermarket-store like Greggs, the local pound bakery, or McDonalds. Sometimes I saw people bring salad and fruit, but that was seldom. To eat healthy food was more expensive. The diet of the working class in general was often food with high carbohydrate contents, meat, pies, sugar and fat. Bourdieu (1995, pp. 186-189) points out in his analysis of how an unconscious habitus plays a role in how people choose or prefer their pleasures and needs, therefore such food preferences are part of the culture of class. If a person is born into a working class family they are used to eating a certain diet of food, so when they grow up they often still follow this internalised habitus. Which class people belong to may affect what kind of food people choose, prefer and can afford. In their choices, social classes reproduce different attitudes in life but also social and cultural distinctions between themselves (Bourdieu, 1995, pp. 190-191). Peoples tastes, values and perception are influenced by economic necessities and social relations rather than by an idea of simple and pure taste (Bourdieu, 1995, p. 193).

### **The story about Noreen**

My main interlocutor in the shop was a retired woman called Noreen. Noreen was always happy and liked to gossip about customers and people in the shop. Her engagement with the shop started five years ago, one day she walked past the shop and saw a notice that they

needed a person to answer the phone. Since she earlier had worked as a phone seller she thought this would be a nice way to spend some of her time. Noreen is working in the shop as a volunteer has given her something to fill her days with since she is healthy and able bodied. She was born in Scotland, her mother is from Scotland, and her father from Wales. When she was five years of age her family moved to Wigan. Her highest education is grammar school. For eighteen years she was a head department manager for a post office. When she was married she moved to London but moved back to Wigan with her two kids after the divorce. Since she was a single mother, her economic circumstances were tight, and she had to take many part time jobs. "I was very lucky, because at that time it was very easy to get a job. It is much more difficult now", she told me. One of the reason for why she thinks it is difficult to get a job now is because there are more people are competing for the same job. Whilst discussing the immigration issue, she argued that immigration into Britain should be more restricted because there was not enough work for everyone. She was okay with people coming if they had a function but believed too many people came and had nothing to do. She told me that she also did not believe in being part of the European Union. The country was fine alone before, so she believed that it would be fine again outside the EU. I asked her how it had been for her to find a house when she was a single mother. She claimed that it was no problem. When she and her boys moved from London to Wigan, her family had a bungalow to move into. She is still living there. It is a private accommodation that has been in her family for ages. She has been lucky because her family had this bungalow, while some people needed to fight hard to find a descent house to live in.

Noreen was very kind with the customers, it was easy to see that she had been working in the customer services branch throughout her life. But she also like to gossip about the customers and used humour to characterise them. I will in the next paragraph outline how the customers, who were the most important for the shop, were handled by the staff.

### **The customers**

Humour which sometimes involves nicknames was used by some of the staff to characterise particular customers. Noreen described how: "We have a couple who very often come into the shop, and we call them the blue sofa". The first time this couple came to the shop they were looking for a blue sofa. The staff showed them all the blue sofas they had, but they did not like any of them, so that is how they got their nicknames. Noreen told me that they always

took the same route around the shop. I often saw many customers do this, they had their favourite way of navigating through the different parts of the store. Sometimes customers bought things, sometimes they just had a look since the shop was getting new stock daily. Some customers told me that they had a daily look to see if they found anything nice and could buy it before someone else did it. These customers looked for bargains and gems rather than for something that they actually needed.

Most of the customers had British ethnicity. I did observe some Eastern European people and African customers. One of the managers told me that it was mostly people with British ethnicity who came to the shop. But about one year ago they saw that more and more people were coming with more diverse forms of ethnicity. He told me that their shop was probably a good place for them to do their shopping since it was cheap, and they had to buy a lot of stuff since they had arrived in a new country. I was discussing with one of the paid staff which kind of people usually came in, and if there were different types of classes. She told me that since Wigan was a working-class town it usually was working class customers. It was only in the area around the hospital that there was a more middle-class group, but they usually did not see these people in the shop. However, they did donate to the shop. I tried to see if some felt that it was embarrassing to go to a charity shop where prices were low, and goods might be regarded as partly soiled or perhaps even dirty and polluted. I wondered if they feared someone would gossip if they were seen in the charity shop, with gossip often functioning in groups as a way of policing behaviour informally. I found many people from diverse backgrounds that I spent time with considered it a common thing to go to the charity shop to see if they could find something useful or beautiful. There is however a difference between working class people going to the shop for their everyday necessities - like clothing and cooking utensil - and middle class people looking for a rare or interesting dinner plate, cup, saucer, piece of jewellery or even fashionable vintage clothes. Most people were of the opinion that it was good to spend their money in the shop because it was going to a good cause. The shop sold both brand new mattresses and used mattresses. Once there was a woman who was looking for mattresses, and she told me that she did not want to buy a mattress that someone already had used so she was only looking at brand new mattresses. This was the only time I found that someone was this honest about what they did not want to buy. I think that more people thought the same, but they were reluctant to tell me.

Most of the customers came in with casual everyday clothes like a jumper and jeans. Some customers wore very nice clothes and were well dressed. Mostly it was people with

white skin colour, but every now and then someone came in with darker skin colour. Many who seemed to be African and non-British of origin came to the shop very well dressed. They would wear a suit or a dress or a nice coat, and nice pants or skirt. They were fussy about what they bought, it had to be good quality and a particular style that was more upper working class or lower middle class. It was almost as though they were seeking to overcome their perceived low social-cultural status, their racial-ethnic identity, so as to re-dignify and re-beautify themselves, articulating a form of the “black is beautiful” theme. Some working class individuals also sought to do the same in their choice of stylised clothes or their embracement of conservative suits or formal women’s gowns and dresses. Dick Hebdige (1979, p. 17) studies forms of consumption - fashion and music - among Britain’s youth in the post-war period and how they developed stylised subcultures. Power, influence and status are not the same for all classes (Hebdige, 1979, p. 14). Following the Second World War, there were changes in the way classes expressed their identities in culture. There were changes in the mass media, family, school, and work which changed the way people lived their life, and there developed new youth cultures as a part of those changes (Hebdige, 1979, p. 74). Much of what was happening in the period of the 1960s and 70s echoes the contemporary period, in that it also involved disappointment with the Labour Party and parliamentary politics in general, decline in the welfare state, the economy was undergoing change with not many jobs and houses available, and a perceived loss of traditional community. These were some of the problems that the working class now faced (Hebdige, 1979, pp. 82-83). One result was a rebellion among the youth who formed their own subcultural groups that often borrowed and poached on the dress codes and behaviour of their parents. For example, the skin heads redignified and aestheticized the factory uniform of their parents with their short hair, big boots, flannel shirts and suspenders or braces over shirts. Skinhead youth transformed working class functional culture into art, into an aesthetic style that redignified the everyday items of that culture (Hebdige, 1979, p. 57).

Even though the prices are very low, some customers still complain about the prices. Customers told me that they thought that they should be able to get a lot of great stuff for a cheap price. Some customers also have a culture of bargaining for lower prices. I had a situation with a non-European couple where they wanted a lot of items and bargained on every item they wanted. I had to ask a paid staff every time they were bargaining, to check if they could get it for a lower price. When I asked for the third item the paid staff told me that should be the last item they could get for a lower price. The couple found a fourth item they

wanted for a lower price, and they wanted to bargain for this item as well. I told them that they could not get a lower price for this item, and that it is a maximum of three items they could get for a lower price. Then they asked another volunteer, and that volunteer asked the paid staff. The paid staff said yes, because the paid staff did not know that it was the same couple that already got three items for a lower price. When the manager found that this couple had bargained for four items he was not happy. The reason for this is that when customers can get a lot of items for a lower price they are thinking that this is normal and how it works. If customers are going to bargain on items all the time the shop will not make money and much time is used up in these negotiations and referrals. Most customers usually bargained for just one item. Some ethnic groups have a culture of bargaining and expect to bargain, others are too embarrassed to bargain. Some allowance was made for that but there was also an attempt to re-educate these ethnic groups away from their expectation of a bargained negotiation around the shop's price. Some people learn to work the system for its loopholes and to maximise what they can get as was the case with the fourth reduced price item. Whilst this does benefit them, it also confirms the caricature of immigrants who exploit loopholes in the system and the generosity of British charity, their kindness and goodness. This was the theme of the mass media and its portrayal of migrants dependent on welfare, but it was also confirmed for some employees by their annoyance with the everyday bargaining character of the few migrants who did come to the charity shop. The fact that they came in increased numbers - though still low - was ominous for them indicating the nature of future Britain.

When discussing the customers with volunteers in the shop, I found a culture of egalitarianism that all customers should be treated in the same way. Ethnicity, or skin colour should not be important. Customers were customers. As long as they brought in money, the workers in the shop were happy, both the paid staff and the volunteers. There was a consciousness that if they did not have customers, their own position was more precarious, and there was enough uncertainty around. Nevertheless, whilst talking to some staff alone, I sometimes got the impression that they had some reservations about certain groups, and that in other social settings they would probably avoid certain foreigners. I found that staff sought to follow the shops guidelines in how to take care of customers and their complaints or requests, but I am not sure how they would interact with them outside the shop especially those who were not the same working class British background.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the media was very concerned about welfare recipients. In the next chapter, I will focus on the influence that the media has on people's

opinions. I will focus on newspapers and how their political stance informed or echoed with what my interlocutors were thinking about the EU as organization.

# Chapter 5: Approaches to the EU and the Media's Influence

## Introduction

In Wigan Borough, the councils are offering a range of activities because of a growing focus on developing a healthy lifestyle. There were many cycling groups that one could join. The cycling group I joined had earlier been organized by a couple, until the council took over the responsibility for all the cycling groups in Wigan Borough. The couple were still leaders of this particular group, but people had to book cycling through the council. The group I joined were mostly made up of pensioners, I think there were 2-3 individuals who were still working. We cycled through the canal route, which is the Leeds-Liverpool canal, this is the longest single canal in Britain, with its 204 kilometres (Wigan Council, 2017). The route they mostly cycled was not long, probably around 5-10 kilometres and it was relatively flat and ideal for pensioners. The majority of the people in the cycling group are retired. Historically, the buildings of the canal started in the 1770s, and finished with building in 1816 (Canal Boat & The Tillegraph, 2016). The canal was used to freight cotton, iron and coal from many of the industrialised areas around the canal. Today the canal is a nature reserve with boaters, fishers, walkers, runners, and cyclists often using the canal.

The cycling group usually met outside the football stadium where there was a small shed with bikes and helmets that people could borrow if they did not have their own helmet or bike. Most participants rented a bike. If people brought their own bike, their cycling was free. If not, they had to pay £24 every six months, the twelve first times were free and after that people had to pay. People thought this was a good deal, since people had the chance to meet twelve times before they had to start paying. It provides a good chance to test out cycling so as to see if this was something they wanted to continue with. All the participants who rented bikes thought the deal was reasonable. The trips usually lasted from an hour and a half to two hours. Once or twice a year the group would go for a much more demanding trip, which would go on for about five hours or so. I participated on such a trip once during my stay. We always drank coffee, tea or hot chocolate after the trips. In the building adjacent to the stadium there was a training centre with a coffee machine which the cycling group had access to. It was only 50 pence for the coffee. One of the women always brought cookies as it was

more expensive to purchase from shops and there was the gift economy of sharing. People enjoyed this social event where they could later have a chat with each other. Usually they had conversations about how the day's trip had been, what they had been doing lately, and the state of their children, spouse, or joint acquaintances. The weather was also one of the main topics of conversation. It was a topic in all my groups, but especially in this group.

### **Description of the group and the interlocutors**

The cycling group was quite large, varying from 12 – 20 people each time. I did explain to its members what I was doing in Wigan and what my project was about. Since the group was big I found it useful to hand out a form where I asked them questions about age, education, work, where they were born, what they voted in the referendum, and which newspapers they were reading. I told them that it was optional to fill it out, but I think everyone felt they were obligated to fill out the form though they left some of the questions blank and they did never tell me much about their lives. I got the impression that they did not want to be a part of my project and that they didn't want to say this directly to me. The form allowed me to find out which individuals wanted to participate and who did not. Since most of the people in this group were retired the interlocutors ranged in age from their mid-50s to early 80s. This was the group where I found my oldest interlocutors.

In the first chapter I discussed my main door opener, Tandy, and in this chapter, I will say more about her since it was in this particular cycling group that I regularly used to meet her. Tandy was in her 50s, married, and had two adult daughters. She was educated as a teacher at the University, and earlier she had been working as a French teacher. Now her work was to take care of students that came from foreign countries. She was hosting and showing them around, hoping to give them a positive experience of England. Tandy believes that foreign students, and other foreigners, who come to visit England should get a good experience of the country and that it is why she likes to engage in this work. Other interlocutors in the groups, include a couple in their 80s, Evan and Nelly. Nelly's highest education was secondary school, while Evan had taken an education to become a teacher. Another couple were Stuart and Kadia, who were in their 70s. Stuart had a University degree while Kadia had completed secondary school. One other major interlocutors was Lane who had secondary school has the highest education but had taken a diploma in management. All my interlocutors in the cycling group were married and had kids. My last main interlocutor



was Howard, both he and his wife were from Liverpool. They had moved to Wigan around 40-50 years ago mainly because of his job as a lighthouse guard, and later he had also worked at the museum. They were also attracted by the cheaper houses in Wigan. Howard was interested in local history and told me much about Wigan's history. His highest education was secondary school. Howard explained how the government paid a certain amount to some of the cycling groups in Greater Manchester which could show that they had many members and those who joined would get better health outcomes. This particular group had some of the best results in North Western England. Despite the government's funding, this group did not have insurance to cover cycling on the main road, so they cycled mainly on the paths around the canal.

Many of my interlocutors who voted for Brexit stated: "the EU is not democratic enough". In this chapter I want to unpack this statement by using Sheldon Wolin's (2008) work about *Democracy Incorporated: Managed Democracy and the Spectre of Inverted Totalitarianism* to explain how my interlocutors experienced the EU as a foreign encroaching organization. In the last section of this chapter I will explore how the mass media interact with pub conversations so as to influence everyday society in the UK. It is through the media that people receive much of the information they have. News broadcast in the mass media was a very common part of everyday discussions among people. In the pubs and other places where my interlocutors would gather, they would talk about the news they had read, seen or heard in the media including news brought up in social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

### **European Union and democracy**

My interlocutors shared the ideal of a democratic political culture which involves people cooperating in common arrangements and practices which, potentially, involves participating in deciding the uses of power while making those who implement power responsible for consequences (Wolin, 2008, p. 138). Some of my interlocutors say that they believe the EU is too political and not democratic enough. Therefore, it is necessary to take a look at democracy and see the forms it can take. Sheldon Wolin (2008, pp. 46-47) launched the term inverted totalitarianism where democracy is understood as a managed democracy which is arranged. In a managed democracy it is not so much illegalities like bribery and corruption that produce it but more unequal forms of lobbying, campaign contributions and control of the mass media. The latter especially contributes to producing managed voters. The political system may seem

that it is a democracy, with opinions being openly shared but it is not a real democracy because powerful groups are able to manage what opinions are shared (Wolin, 2008, p. 140-142). Wolin (2008, pp. 46-47) calls it inverted totalitarianism because the world can be changed by managing methods like free markets, military supremacy and friendly regimes. These themes are considered as a large part of the state's own security and economic needs. The politicians who are in power do not involve the citizens in the political process or they take advantage of their positions in order to gain their agenda because they are concerned about the economy and that the military should become very strong (Wolin, 2008, p. 60). According to Wolin (2008): "...democracy is about the conditions that make it possible for ordinary people to better their lives by becoming political beings and by making power responsive to their hopes and needs" (p. 260). Citizens who argue that the EU is not democratic may not have the feeling that their hopes and needs are being fulfilled by their government structures. People have different perceptions of their situation - employment, housing, health care, education and their children's future. Their satisfaction and expectations are related to their own class background, age, education, taste and culture. Many have a sense that the democracy does not work as it should, that somethings are moving into a direction which citizens struggle to identify with. Contemporary democracy is increasingly dependent on the quality and accessibility to public education, especially of public universities (Wolin, 2008, p. 161). In the UK this access is becoming more problematic for many citizens. Some students see education outside of the UK in other EU countries as desirable and one reason to stay in the EU, others blame competition with immigrants and the increasing demands of immigrants on public funding for their own lack of access to education and for high university fees. This leads to demands that Britain withdraw from the EU so British state resources can be kept for "British" citizens. My interlocutors who had a University degree were more informed and participated in elections to the EU parliament which was not the case with my interlocutors who had lower education qualifications. Bourdieu (1995, pp. 204-205) rightly regards education as partly grounded in the social and cultural division between the classes, which in turn influenced Brexit voting patterns. Whatever their education level, people should have the feeling of living in a democratic world where their concerns are well protected (Wolin, 2008, p. 260). My interlocutors who thought the EU was undemocratic did not have this feeling and this made them try to find new political directions. Many working class people have, as I have mentioned earlier in the thesis, started to vote for Right Wing parties and for Conservative parties that often attract wealthier middle class people, who are better educated and involved in business (Wolin, 2008, pp. 149-

150). It is quite interesting that many of the working class people have swung to the right, like with some of my interlocutors. Some were previously left Labour Party voters but want a change and are looking in new directions that they think are better.

In the European Union there are many compromises done within the political agendas because the countries in the Union have different interests (Shore & Wright, 1997, pp. 26-27). My interlocutor Howard told me that he voted for Brexit because he wanted to be independent from the EU. This was because there were no elections to the EU parliament that were on the same social, economic and political issues as elections in the British Parliament. Even though there are elections by UK citizens to the European Parliament there is a very low voter turnout, there has only been 32-36 percent UK citizens who have voted in the EU elections since 1979 (European Parliament, 2014). Low voter turnout indicates a lack of popular participation combined with low key campaigns. This compares poorly to other countries who have been a part of EU for a longer period. Except for the Netherlands which recently has had a low rate, the other EU countries who have been members since 1979 have often more than 40 percent rate, and none has a worse rate than UK. In Belgium the rate has been around 90 percent from 1979 to 2014 (European Parliament, 2014). This may have something to do with the EU office being located in Belgium and with their voters experiencing more intensive election campaigns than what happens in the UK. Another reason for the perceived lack of a participating democracy could be because the group of electors in an EU electorate is too big, and no candidates can visit them. The lack of elections campaign makes people not attentive to EU elections. There are also other issues. One of my other interlocutors, Lane, thought the EU had become “too political” and were involved in land grabbing. What he meant by this was that he thought it was more important for the EU to get more countries to join the union than it was to take care of the interest of the existing EU countries. Opinions like this were very common among my interlocutors who voted for Brexit and they indicate profound distrust of the motives, intentions and the sense of responsibility of EU politicians and bureaucrats.

There is much public discussion about Germany’s power in the EU, not just in the UK but also in other EU nations there is a perception that Germany has much more power and influence than other member states. During my research, I found many Right Wing newspapers and blog sites focused on this issue. Many intellectuals but also other Left Wing citizens of the EU, have blamed Germany and the EU - especially their economic austerity policies - for Europe swinging to the far right. In the UK, Nigel Farage has been prominent in

arguing that we are living in a German dominated Europe (UKIP MEPs, 2015). UKIP, the party that Farage led, was able to gain 12.6 percent of the popular vote in the 2015 election (*The Guardian*, 2015). This fell to 1.8 percent in 2017 (*BBC*, 2017). To some extent this was because The Conservative and Labour Party took up some of UKIP's policies. Rather than the UKIP party being unsuccessful in 2017, it is possible to see it as having produced a swing to the right by the major parties who appropriated its politics and rhetoric. As mentioned in chapter 2, Europe Right Wing populism is growing, and this includes Germany. In the election in 2017 Angela Merkel and her party did win, but the far-right party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) received 13 percent of the Bundestag (Clarke, 2017). Josef Janning (2015) has written that in 2015 there was three crises bound up with Germany's role in the EU. One of them was that German accepted many refugees to come into the country. Most controversial was Angela Merkel's decision to admit over a million Syrian refugees in 2015 (Bershidsky, 2017). Once they become permanent citizens in Germany the free movement rights makes it difficult to stop them moving to other countries, not that many would choose to leave Germany. My interlocutors were reluctant to mention Germany in particular, this could probably have something to do with the memory of the Second World war and them appearing to be holding a grudge when they blame Germany for different things that are currently problematic.

I found it interesting that even though I participated in many different groups in my fieldwork I could see a pattern with how culture and social status affected what people voted. Take Tandy for example, one of her main reasons to vote against Brexit was because both her daughters would one day want to live in another country in the European Union. She wanted it to be as easy as possible for them to do this. Tandy also liked to travel and was continuously doing this because she now knew more people in other countries. The married couple Stuart and Kadia also voted to stay in the EU. Stuart argued that to withdraw from the EU would take the UK backwards, instead of forwards. Kadia believed that it was safer to stay in the EU, because it was something they were already familiar with. She knows what she can expect with being in the EU, but she does not know what will happen if the UK left. It would create too much uncertainty.

One important medium that shaped many peoples understanding and attitudes towards the EU was the British media, especially the newspapers many of which chose sides in the referendum. Which media channels people get their information from is important in shaping

how people understand the world around them. I will therefore focus on the media's impact on people.

### **Media's impact on the referendum**

The mass media comes in the form of many different platforms like radio, television, film, music, the internet and printed forms such as newspapers, magazines and other popular literature. Economy, technologies, science, and government policies affect how these different media interact and operate (Spitulnik, 1993, p. 293). More anthropologists started to do research on the mass media about twenty years ago, which is late compared to other studies like sociology and communication studies which started much earlier (Spitulnik, 1993, 294: Dickey, 1997, p. 413). It is necessary for anthropologists to ask questions about the media and how people use it because of its large influence on modern everyday ethnographic contexts (Dickey, 1997, p. 415). The most known research that anthropologists have done on the mass media is often about how the media works within in and around indigenous groups. Here anthropologists have been concerned with social processes of change, potent arenas of conflict and internal power struggles (Spitulnik, 1993, p. 303). This has led to many more new studies of the mass media (Spitulnik, 1993, p. 306).

Newspaper, radio, TV and internet were off course additional important media sources. Tandy regularly watched the *BBC* because it was supposedly more neutral. Not all my interlocutors agreed, and some claimed: "They are supposed to be neutral, but they are not, they are just biased". Some of my interlocutors did react to topics on the *BBC* and this included politicians that who were invited for interviews at the *BBC*'s studios. Like once, Tony Blair was being screened on the *BBC* and was talking about Brexit, and the same man who said that he thought the *BBC* was biased also stated that he did not understand why Tony Blair should get the option to have something to say on national TV. Perhaps this was unfair, and it was, but it illustrates how in this previously working class area even Labour leaders who had been Prime Minister were challenged on their right to be a national voice and especially on Brexit.

As noted earlier in chapter 2, Benedict Anderson (1991) has analysed how the mass media has a big influence in shaping the shared imaginary forms of belonging and participation among citizens who are often dispersed and have no face to face knowledge of each other. Media often cover the news in a way where they draw boundaries between

countries, distinguishing themselves from others whilst affirming their own solidarity. This may take the form of a news report on a soccer match or even just dividing the news into “national” news versus “international” news. In this way, a dispersed audience may identify themselves with other people in their own country who are in other locations, whilst distancing themselves from those who are not from their own country. Some foreign tv shows and radio shows are seen as more controversial than others. There seems to be slightly more controversial radio and TV shows in the United States than there is in UK. For example, the American shock jocks Mike Savage was banned from the UK because of his far-right talk-show *The Savage Nation* which provoked a conflict with the home secretary, Jacqui Smith (Mulholland, 2009).

Wolin (2008, p. 107) argues that the decline of democracy and the concentration of media ownership are inter-related and affect each other. “The responsibility of the responsible media includes maintaining an ideological ‘balance’ that treats the ‘Left’ and the ‘Right’ as polar opposites as well as moral and political equivalents” (Wolin, 2008, p. 8). When I discussed media with my interlocutors I could understand that they thought there was not a sufficient balance, and that the media, especially the newspapers, did takes sides. I found that the particular newspaper that individuals read often was a strong indicator for how they had voted in the referendum. In cases where people read different newspapers, there were often clear differences in their opinions. British newspapers are known for having a strong party-political position and in the Brexit referendum many of them did claim which side they had chosen. According to the *Huffington Post* the newspapers who supported Leave had an audience on 4.8 million, while those backing Remain had an audience of just over 3million (Ridley, 2016). *The Daily Mail*, *Daily Mirror*, *The Sun* and *The Daily Telegraph* backed Leave. Newspapers which backed Remain were *The Times*, *The Guardian* and *The Financial Times* (Ridley, 2016). Many Left and Right Wing newspapers crossed sides over the referendum. Nevertheless, many readers received their arguments and facts mostly from newspapers and other mass media outlets like TV and radio. In times when people have difficulties making up their minds over which party to vote for, the media may have a deciding influence on people’s choice. People can read newspapers that take a stand either on the Left Wing or the Right Wing. According to Newton & Brynin (2001, p. 267) the media are able to make four or five percent difference in a referendum, and if this is true this could be enough to change the outcome of an election.

Most of the interlocutors in the cycling group did use newspaper as their main source for getting information. Lane, Evan, Nelly and Howard all read the *Daily Mail*. While Kadia and Stuart read *The Guardian*. Tandy did not read newspapers, because she claimed that newspapers did not deliver news in a good way. She preferred to watch and hear news on *BBC* online. While *Daily Mail* is regarded as a conservative newspaper, *The Guardian* is widely seen as a centre left newspaper. These newspapers present issues and arguments in a way that suits their political alignment. People who read different newspapers get confirmed in their political position by being provided with arguments that suits their political persuasion. This is one of the reasons why some of my interlocutors say they are not reading any newspapers. They are aware of the political alignment by different newspapers. They also do not wish to pay for news information which today can come from a variety of free sources such as the internet, radio or television which they can then try to counterbalance with each other. Some of these media outlets are also politically aligned so people can choose particular radio, tv channels, and programs or particular internet sites that provide the information and views they seek.

I did discuss newspapers with many of my younger interlocutors and they did have strong opinions about the topic. Zara thought *The Guardian* and *The Independent* were ok to read, but apart from that she had this to say about the media<sup>7</sup>:

Anything you know, you know because you made a point of finding out. But obviously a lot of people do not do that. They just believe what they read and unfortunately the media is, I don't know how to describe our media, it is horrific. Our media is just absolutely shocking, the language is bad, it utters lies. That is, I think the media takes a big part of the blame for the referendum results. Massive part.

Zara made big critical statements about the media, like utter lies. Dominic agreed with Zara that the media was the reason for the Brexit result: "So, the main reason we left in my opinion is because of the media betrayal". With the growth of different media channels today, it is also easier for ordinary people to participate in the news.

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<sup>7</sup>I have used sound record

In some cases, the media may leave out certain things, they might censor certain protests and forms of activism because they do not want these activities to get wider attention (Wolin, 2008, p. 217). In the aftermath of the referendum there is still a large focus in the media, both in UK and outside the UK, about how it will end. It is currently less than a year remaining before the UK should withdraw from the EU, and the negotiations are still ongoing. Such topics in the media are a part of people's everyday conversations in pubs, cycling clubs, jogging clubs, over a tea or coffee, in lunch breaks at work, and so on. In the next paragraph I will present an example from the pub, which has a large place in popular English culture.

### **Pub life an important part of English social life**

You have not been in England until you have entered a pub, the pub is a major meeting place. People had different opinions of the pubs in Wigan. The first time I was going to meet Zara, we were discussing where to go. This was in the beginning of my time in Wigan, and so I asked if she had a favourite place she used to go to. I told her that the only pub I had been to so far was "The Pub to Be". She described it as one of the better places, so we went there. Other times when I mentioned particular pubs I had visited, people were shocked that I had been there. Especially with the pub called "Xena". The jogging group said to me: "Really? That pub is very bad. You should not go there". That pub had dirty glasses, the toilets was unclean and the whole pub was looking worn. My interlocutors thought that it was down and out people who went to this pub. I was told that some of its clients were addicts and criminals. When I told this to my younger interlocutors, who were in their 20s they said: "That pub is not good at all. It is where the people who voted for Brexit are going". In the end of my fieldwork I told my younger interlocutors that "The Pub to Be" was the pub I have been visiting most. Then one of them replied "There is no other pub in Wigan that is worth going to". It seems like in England people have the same loyalty to pubs as they to their soccer teams, regions and home town. Most interlocutors had a clear sense of what pub was good, and what pubs should be avoided. My older interlocutors often suggested I should go and visit Blackpool and look at the pubs there. This was a nice town, that they often visited themselves. My younger interlocutors did not agree when I asked them about this. They thought that it was an old and worn down town, the pubs was bad and not worth visiting. Here Pierre Bourdieu's (1995, p. 117) concept of distinctions may be utilized, as he also applies it to the opposition between younger and older generations and how this disparity can articulate social and cultural changes in the community, especially in the lower classes.



One of the first things my young interlocutor Dominic told me: “In England it is a culture for round buying. People will buy different rounds”. But I never saw my younger interlocutors practice this. I think round buying was dependent on many different things like money, and how well people knew each other because it requires trust and fairness to work. However, the jogging group did engage in this. When people know each other, and usually when they have the same status, there is round buying among them (Hunt & Satterlee, 1986, p. 530). Reciprocity was important. On any given occasion, it was not always the case that all of them had paid the same number of rounds. If it was happening that one person bought more than the others one day, the group would remember this person did not have to buy so much the next time (Hunt & Satterlee, 1986, p. 530). Like the time I spent on one of my last day with them they never let me buy my own drink. When I first came into the restaurant the other people were already there. One of my interlocutors stood up as soon as he saw me. He had already bought drinks for himself, but he wanted to buy a drink for me. They even bought food for me at the restaurant, they knew very well that I could pay for myself, but they still wanted to do it. When we came to the pub I tried at first to buy my own drink, but they would not allow me to do so. I learned through the time I was there that it is an important gesture and part of the culture to be nice to guests like this, and that I just had to accept that people wanted to use their money on me, as a means of displaying their acceptance and respect for me.

Hunt & Satterlee (1986, p. 524) write in their article from the 80s that women were often excluded from drinking activities. This must have changed, because I did not find that women were excluded in the slightest within my group of interlocutors. The pub was as much for men as it was for women. I had the impression that both my male and female interlocutors were quite frequent visitors of the pubs. While I could see more men than women in the pubs, there was usually a good mix of both. When there were both men and women present in the pub, the women did talk as much as men. But I could see that men and women did drink different things, and also that the men drank faster than the women. Usually men only drank beer, and women could drink this as well, but quite often women also drank drinks with vodka and spirits or wine.

The conversation when we went to pubs was very similar to the conversation we held during coffee breaks. The biggest difference was that people did open up more about their personal life's and issues. There was also more honesty when we were at the pubs than in a coffee shop. People discussed their travels and travel plans at pubs, and some of my interlocutors who saw themselves as working class people had been to Spain and Thailand,

and quite often visited London. Others told me that they did not travel much because of the cost and their low income. I believe that travelling tells a lot about class, that people who have the ability to travel are not at the very bottom end. Political stuff is often raised and, as mentioned in chapter 2, the pubs are also used as sites for political meetings. Often a conversation would start with: "I saw in media that...". Political topics were often discussed both in the pub, but also in other areas. This is the way that media discussion set the standard of everyday discussions.

Sensational news, like the terror attacks, were also a common topic not only in the pub but also in other areas I visited. This is a topic I will talk more about in the next chapter when I present the jogging group. We not only jogged but spent time in the coffee shop where we discussed a lot of things that were happening in people's everyday life.

## Chapter 6: Views on Immigrants

### Introduction

I joined a jogging group and participated once a week for one hour. We drank some coffee afterwards. We had to pay one pound every time. Usually it was the same people who participated, but every now and then I saw some new faces. The core group, who I spent most time with, consisted of six people. It is these people I am writing about in this chapter. This core group had become good friends. There were three running leaders in the group. People were in different physical conditions, so we split up and jogged in different groups. We did always meet in the reception of the training centre. This building was in a good condition and was looking new. The council did run this building. Around there were different stores like toy store, sport store and clothes store. There was also coffeehouse where we did go to when we was finished with jogging.

Tina and Kimberly were more than happy to tell me about their motivation for jogging. Nancy, Fredric, Caleb and Kate also discussed running, along with the political questions in which I was interested. Caleb, Kimberly and Tina are from Wigan Borough. Nancy and Kate from the area around London, but they had lived in Wigan for many years. Fredric was from a small town close to Wigan. The age of the group ranged from early 50s to mid 60s. All of them have adult children. Kate, Fredric and Kimberly have retired. While the rest of the group work part time. Caleb could retire if he wanted but he was in a good health and wanted to have something to fill his days with. His highest education was college where he studied part-time to become an engineer, but now he is working as a care assistant. He is quite happy with his job since it is flexible and part time. So he still has time to do other things. The people who are retired have grammar school as their highest education. Kate had been working in a bank. She had taken some courses in her younger days. Fredric told me that he had many small jobs through the time, but he had mainly worked as a carer. Both Fredric and Caleb volunteered as jogging leaders. Nancy was working with children in the council. She helped them to find a place to live. The work they all have seems to be service work in the helping professions. This is not only the case for this group, but I found that many people worked like this. I think this kind of work is very important in the Wigan Borough and is thus susceptible to welfare cutbacks by government.

The access and information I got from this group was very valuable for me. I was very happy with the access I received in the other group as well, but this was definitively the group where I got the chance to know my interlocutors best. I think some of the reason was the friendship my interlocutors had to each other. It seems like they know each other very well. It was not obvious to me that this would provide good access, they could easily have used their relationships with each other to close ranks and to lock me out. They might not have wanted a new preying individual come-in to the group, but luckily for me I was accepted, and they were very open and kind. Usually I did the interviews with everyone present in the group, and I felt that this worked well. Some days I did one-to-one interview, and once Caleb and I met at the pub to do an interview where I used the sound recorder. Therefore, when I am citing Caleb this is transcribed, whilst with the other citations of people in the group I was writing whilst they were talking. This chapter starts with how jogging is seen to improve mental health, and how people get a larger social network through jogging. I joined two sport activities during my fieldwork, and I will present Gary Armstrong's (1998) work on local working class forms of loyalty and soccer, where he has another approach than what I had in my fieldwork. Thereafter, I present Caleb and the view he has on what people are able to wear or not. I will also discuss how the the rest of the groups viewed this issue. I will also discuss the work of other anthropologists on class like Bourdieu and Gillian Evans who worked in the south of London. The last paragraph will be on the terror attacks which occurred whilst I was in the field and the response of my interlocutors.

### **Jogging as an important part to increase mental health and social life**

There are different meanings and functions for the different sports among the social classes (Bourdieu, 1978, p. 834). The education level people have influences the sport activity they follow or participate in. What kind of sport people enjoy often says something about which class they are a part of (Bourdieu, 1978, pp. 823, 826). For the working class and the lower middle class - especially adolescences - it is important to participate in a team sport, so football, cycling and rugby are the most popular of these (Bourdieu, 1978, p. 828). For typical working class sports that focus on the individual body, there are sports like boxing or wrestling which are most popular (Bourdieu, 1978, p. 837). Team sports like basketball, handball, rugby and football are most common amongst office workers, technicians, and shopkeepers (Bourdieu, 1978, p. 837). How different sports became labelled or embraced by the working class or elites is partly historical and has to do with which class was the first to

play or attend this sport. It has to do with regional or local loyalties, and which kind of school individual attended. Economic differences are an important factor influencing which kind of sports the different classes embrace, so sports which are more expensive like yachting are more for the elites. Regionalism also plays an important part because different sports developed in different arenas (Bourdieu, 1978, pp. 822-824). The relation people have to their own body is a fundamental aspect of the habitus which distinguishes the working class from the privileged class (Bourdieu, 1978, p. 838). Jogging is according to Bourdieu (1978, p. 839) a sport that supposedly does not offer as much in the way of competitive satisfaction because it presents itself as a strictly health-oriented sport, and therefore also a rationalized activity. Bourdieu here is exploring the culture of rationalism that sustains and merges into everyday leisure activities so as to distinguish groups from each other in the way they culturally align and identify themselves.

Earlier anthropologists have studied sport so as to understand different aspects of the social life, like using it as a window into class relations in Britain. Gary Armstrong (1998), for example, did fieldwork in what had earlier been a steel marking area, he focused on soccer hooligans in Sheffield. The hooligans were primarily white working class males. These hooligans did a lot of fighting where they used ash trays, bottles, glasses, chairs, sticks and knives. The latter was accepted but problematic, it was unmanly compared to fighting with one's body. Guns and hitting a woman or a small effete male were also problematic and not something they did or could boast about. Armstrong (1998) aim in his book *Football Hooligans: Knowing the score* was to explore and undercut the perception many people have about the roughest hooligans who are from the working class. Some people have claimed that they have a love of violence, and Armstrong explores the rule-governed nature of violence and how it emerges out of community rivalries (1998). There were two soccer clubs in Sheffield, and they were each other's biggest enemies. It was mainly white working class who joined in the fighting, but there were also some working class youth with a migrant background, and this complicated the suggestion that hooligan identity was based on white lower-working-class culture (Armstrong, 1998, p. 149).

When I was jogging with the group, we usually jogged around five kilometres, some would jog a bit more than five. Most of the times we jogged around the canal, and sometimes a bit further or in a different direction. Running had become a part of each member's everyday life, and their lifestyle. This lifestyle is creating their identity, often using affiliations to social environment since lifestyle often develops in a social space. For my

interlocutors this lifestyle also provided social connections (Gullestad, 1989, pp. 103-106). I asked if they were competing against anyone else, but they told me that it was mainly against themselves. So, there is an aspect of individualism in this collective activity. They all had their different reasons to start running. Tina told me that she started running to improve her mental health. She found that she felt much better when she started running, it relieved stress and anxiety, made her calm and able to function better when she was with other people. The other people in the group did agreed with Tina. Kimberly was new in the group. She started in the beginning in January. She told me that for her it was good to be a part of something as it tied her to other people. Since she was retired she had no work to go to and thus lost the sociality that work also provides. In the jogging group, she made new friendships which were important for her social life. Usually she was running behind everyone else because she had some chest problems, but she did fight hard to beat herself. The group did not see Kimberly as a slow person, they told me that she was getting better and better every time. It was this self-confidence and emotional support that she also sought in the group. The attitude of the groups spirits is that as long running is making people happy then they are more than welcomed to join no matter what physical condition they may have. They tried to motivate each other. If someone felt that they had a bad running day, then the other people in the group would come in with apologies, excuses and with good words to that person.

Some individuals in the group sometimes participated in running competitions. Nancy told me that she started running two years ago. She was working part-time and wanted something to fill her day. It kept her healthy and fit, relieved stress and provided friendship. Every September there is a 10km run in Wigan. One year after she joined the group she participated in this particular run. One of the leaders told her that she believed Nancy could do the run, which became a big source of motivation for her to continue running. Then she wanted to join many new runs after that. Many in the group participated in running competitions that were outside of Wigan, in other places in North West England. They started together as friends in the start line, but as soon as the run began they split up for the most important thing was to do as good a run as possible. They had different goals. For Fredric and Kate, they sought the best time in their age-group that ran in. Nancy told me that she was not good enough yet to win her age group, so her goal was to beat her personal best in the competitions she participated. Training for a race can involve not just running but discussions about what participants should eat the week before the race and what exercised to do regularly beforehand.

After a run we would visit a coffee shop. People always ordered a coffee or tea, and some did order cake as well. Most of the conversation was about how the running was going, which competitive runs participants would join next time and how important it was to have this running group. If some had participated in a recent competition, a photo from the competition might be brought and shown. We also discussed other things that people were interested in. I am a huge fan of the Eurovision song contest, so in May when it was almost time for the grand final I was interested to hear what my interlocutors thought about it since Eurovision is a music contest where many European countries are brought together in one big festivity. Most people did not watch it. I was told that in UK, many laughed about this and even found it stupid. Nancy told me that she liked to watch it, but her husband did not like it, so they had not seen it for a while. She also commented ironically: “No one will probably vote for us this year because of Brexit”, and then laughed. Many in my other groups also joked about this topic as way of overcoming divisions and tensions over participation in the EU. The shared laughter unified them briefly in a common recognition of the response of others even though they continued to be divided. Noreen, in the charity shop, told me that she had not planned to watch it but that she had watched at it this year for my sake. I thought it was funny that she saw it because of me but also recognised the importance of social relations for many of them.

When I went to a pub with Caleb we discussed his view about people who wears symbols that means something to them. He did not like it when others tried to stop them wearing these items.

### **Caleb – a man who always had lived in Wigan**

Caleb and I met at “The Pub to Be” around 8pm on a Friday evening in the beginning of February. There are always many people in the pubs on Friday evenings. Caleb explained how many of the working class would go out every Friday to celebrate that a long work week was finally over. He often went out to have some beers on Fridays, and sometimes on Saturdays and Sundays as well. The price of alcohol in the UK is low and creates a different sociality than what it does in Norway.

Caleb has one daughter and one grandson, they are both adults. His main interest is running and to some extent cycling. He has been running since the 80s and has even run seven full marathons. He was really proud of the times he achieved during his running exercises and

competitions. He liked to do other outdoor activities like fishing and walking. We discussed sport a lot, especially rugby since that was his favourite sport. In Wigan there is one football team and one rugby team who play at the same stadium. He used to like football, but not anymore. There is rivalry between the fans of the football team and the rugby team over which will be the top sport in Wigan. Caleb belittles the football team, since he is a rugby person. He says this in a humorous way to cultivate friendly rivalry. Wigan Warriors have always been the biggest rugby club in Wigan. However, Wigan Athletic Football Club, which used to be a small club, has grown in the latest years.

Caleb went on to say how stupid he thinks it is when people are denied the right to use symbols that mean something to them. During the world cup qualifications, he claimed that England was refused the right to use the symbol of the poppy by Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA). Nevertheless, English and Scottish football players wore black armbands bearing a red poppy during the World Cup qualifying match at Wembley, despite even though that FIFA did not allow this (Bulman, 2016). FIFA did basically not allow the teams wear the poppy so as to mark Armistice Day, citing their rules that it is not allowed to use anything political or religious while playing (Bulman, 2016). England was fined £35,000 for defying FIFA's rules (De Menezes, 2016). Given that red poppy is to commemorate persons who have died in the war, FIFA was worried about it as a potent nationalist symbol for many British soldiers died on the European battle field (De Menezes, 2016). There was a symbolic equation being made between soccer matches and more bloodier contests. Caleb also raised the issue that on some occasions, individuals are not allowed to wear the cross. Right Wing newspapers like *Daily Express* however championed the right of Christians to use cross at the work (Dawar, 2012). Caleb thinks that there are two rules for foreigners and UK citizens and that discrimination is now working against national citizens. He argued that foreign people can use what they want whenever they want to and had gained too much influence in determining policies at the expense of those who had sacrificed their lives for their country. It is foreigners and a certain national and international culture that caters to them which is resisted and resented by Caleb:

You know the world cup, the football. The world cup, there were players who could not wear the poppy. They were upset. You know the poppy, symbols of poppy, cause it is a pop. It respects the remembrance of everyone who died, the English people. The English football team had the poppy on their shirt, but they could not wear them. I do



not know why they could not wear them. They said you cannot show your own countries. And you have people not able to wear a cross, I mean it upset many people that I know as well. It is said by all the other religions because they are coming from another country. The people from any country that come in seem to get whatever in some cases. It is hard to say this without saying it like a racist, but it is not. Like when I go to another country I would respect their way of life, their anything. But some of the minority come here and say No! No! we are doing this, and we have to do this. And the country is doing a lot for them. You know to make places for their culture. They believe in something, which is ok, but someone push it further and then say we offend them sometimes.

Caleb's views are not unique but widely shared by many in the working class who become alienated from the humanitarianism and cosmopolitanism of left wing intellectuals and politicians. The latter are seen to be too international at the expense of national sentiment, causes and rights. Democratic rights are invoked in defence of the white working class majority using claims that people should be able to wear whatever they want because other people from another backgrounds claim and do use this right. Claims that some people are being prevented from wearing something that is meaningful for them leads many in the working class to swing to the right and to become suspicious and opposed to international organisations like FIFA or the EU. Caleb's discussion of FIFA and soccer is really a discussion about the English people losing control of the boundaries of their identities, even their right to remember and honour the sacrifices of their dead. The red poppy is part of British nationalism and what it sacrificed for a Europe that now does not respect English boundaries, symbols, feelings or memories (Freeman, 2017). During my time in England, I saw loads of red poppies, people wear the flower either on their jackets, bags, or cars. The red poppy and its emotional power became a symbol not just of the war and the dead but of Britain's need to defend its boundaries and rights in the present world from an EU that was organising a different kind of cultural invasion. The other thing in Caleb's interview is the theme of ungrateful migrants, who come and then demand and demand, who puts their cultural rights above those of the British. These ungrateful migrants do not appreciate what they have been given by their host but instead abuse their host's hospitality. Caleb, like many other of my interlocutors, saw migrants taking it for granted what they were able to wear and they did not show any humility and thankfulness to the British people.

## **Brexit and immigration**

Anthropologist Gillian Evans (2012a, p. 3) has done research in Bermondsey, a deindustrialised town to the south of the City of London. There was reconstruction going on in the town as the result of gentrification. She followed two sisters who were on low incomes because they were both living on the job seekers allowance that only one of them received, and this was only £50 each week (Evans, 2012a, p. 4). For the working class people in this post-industrial town there was a struggle to survive because they were low paying jobs (Evans, 2012a, p. 10). Evans (2012a, pp. 6-7) describes how they lived from one of the sister's benefits, and the other had to wait four months before she could get benefits after she had to give up work because of her ill health. People are made to be individually responsible for their lives. Evans (2012a, pp. 10-12) interlocutors became marginalised and isolated because of the lack of work and money, and poverty was a struggle for them. These struggles became more pronounced after Thatcher's policies of welfare cutbacks when where individuals had to take more care of themselves.

Anthropologist had earlier studied industrialised towns but now had to study what happens when the industrialisation comes to an end and the towns need to take new steps forward. This occurs alongside new immigrants coming into the country who sometimes settle in these de-industrialised areas. These new foreigners are not always welcomed by many existing residents who see them as "others" (Evans, 2012b, p. 21). When foreign people were moving into Bermondsey they were met with racism especially so for people from Asia or people with "dark" skin colour (Evans, 2012b, p. 23). Evans (2012b, p. 23) explains how the foreign women were trying to fit into the community and tells about a woman who voluntarily cleans the common area on a Sunday so as to to make an effort that hoped would help her get acceptance British women. However, the British women did not focus on the positive side of this work but looked for mistakes that the foreign woman had done so they could get a confirmation that coloured women were not good enough to interact with. So, many of these foreign women did not feel welcomed because of the way they were treated, and the kinds of things people said to them (Evans, 2012b, p. 23). Since foreign people struggled to get to know the "white" working class, they knew little about how much the "white" working class struggled with living and working conditions (Evans, 2012b, p. 25). Many political parties have tried to reach voters in Bermondsey, and though there is racism in the area, the far-right parties such as British National Party has struggled to get support locally (Evans, 2012b, pp. 26-27). One of the reasons is because the citizens in Bermondsey are very proud of their

history and their ancestors who fought against fascism during the war and even locally when fascist marchers in 1936 were thrown out of London's East End (Evans, 2012b, pp. 26-27: Barling, 2011).

Sudden changes in community life can produce a nationalistic shift to demanding stricter borders and the exclusion of those who refused to fit in. The Norwegian feminist anthropologist Marianne Gullestad (2002, p. 46) has in many of her writings been concerned with how people relate to different aspects in modern life that are different from those of others and found that equality was a very common word used to create forms of belonging and exclusion. Often people were concerned with the similarity to others and looked to see if they shared anything with other people. The actors needed to find something that united them with other people otherwise this affirmed them in their difference and incompatibility. People are dependent on other people and have a need to assimilate with other so as to find something in common and this can be called an "imagined sameness". If people find that they are "too different" from each other then they might avoid each other because they assume they have nothing in common (Gullestad, 2002, p. 47). Gullestad (2002, p. 47) discusses this in a Norwegian context but it is very much the same in Wigan and how my interlocutors regard people who is not born in the UK as other. They assumed that they had nothing in common with those people and created a distance that may not be quite as representative as they imagine it to be.

Statistically the distribution of Brexit votes was very complex. Interestingly, areas with high, established immigration levels tended to vote remain, while those areas that had experienced a sudden influx of EU migrants during the last ten years were often more pro-Leave (Powell, 2017, p. 231: Goodwin & Heath, 2016). Many of my interlocutors were concerned with how people with another ethnicity were bringing their own "culture" into England. Class and race had an impact on how individuals responded to different cultures and identities. My interlocutors were quite concerned with people who had a different ethnicity. "Ethnicity, as a source of cultural meaning and as a principle for social differentiation, is highly distributive within any society or set of social contexts involving the same personnel" (Eriksen, 1991, p. 130). Thomas Hylland Eriksen (1991, p 131) goes further to state that ethnicity is a part of the way social formations are made, and it involves cultural differences which vary across and within different cultures and individuals. Class and gender are fundamental in the organization of societies, but this is not the case with ethnicity. It is a universalising ideology with mutual differences and can be nationalistic. Therefore, it needs

to be handled in a different way than class and gender (Eriksen, 1991, p. 133). Yet class and gender can intersect with ethnicity such that each influences the form that the other can take. In many contexts, ethnicity is the single over-riding principle organising collective social distinctions in daily life. Those ethnic distinctions are rooted in perceptions of differences between lifestyles and other lifestyles that some people regard as inconvenient or inferior (Eriksen, 1991, p. 139). Cultural differences are something that arise not just in ethnic settings but is found in situations of rural/urban, working-class/middle-class, and female/male distinctions (Eriksen, 1991, p. 139).

How a person chooses to live is often informed by their education, occupation, economic wealth and ethnicity. In addition, religiousness, or whether someone is from the city or a rural village may affect that individual's way to life (Gullestad, 1989, p. 112). Gullestad (2002, pp. 45-46) has used her fieldwork in Norway to discuss European debates about immigrants and how it relates to topics like egalitarianism, majority nationalism and racism. Gullestad (2002) uses a number of examples about how people with an immigration background are treated in Norway. She discusses how Constitutions Day is very important for Norwegians who often want everything to be "very Norwegian" during the public celebrations. Many people get upset if there is a mixing of other cultural, ethnic or national symbols of that, for example using other flags than the Norwegian flag, or even if people who are born in other countries take a prominent organising or participating role on that day (Gullestad, 2002, pp. 55-56). Gullestad (2002, p. 48) gives the example of a person who is born in Pakistan, but lived in Norway and participated on the committee, but experienced comments where people said that she should not be a part of that committee because she was not Norwegian enough. There is also a struggle for some immigrants who really try hard to fit into their new community but continue to be labelled as an "immigrant" (or "innvandrere" who is the word Gullestad use) no matter how long they had lived in Norway (Gullestad, 2002, p. 50). In cases like these immigrants may feel disappointed and feel like they always will be treated as an outsider. It may also be speculated that if people know that they always will be treated as an outsider, then they might not do as much to fit into their new country (Gullestad, 2002, p. 50). There is the risk that people defined as immigrants will always be treated as guests, where they will never be accepted so as to have the freedom and welfare support in the same way as native people (Gullestad, 2002, pp. 53-54). Colour is significant when talking about immigrants. Immigrants with a "white" skin colour are often more likely to be accepted than immigrants with a "dark" skin colour. With "dark" skin colour it is easier for people to

think of this person as “other” while with a “white” skin colour it is more likely that people will not distance themselves in the same way. This can occur even when a person with “dark” skin colour has lived longer in the country than a person with “white” skin colour (Gullestad, 2002, p. 56). Gullestad (2002, p. 58) claims that the younger generations are more concerned with urban life and are more likely to identify themselves with people who are born in other countries. This fits in with my ethnography discussed in chapter 3, where the younger age groups were against Brexit and had more cosmopolitan’s attitudes.

In the jogging group, Kate was the only one who voted against Brexit. She told me that for her the economy was most important in making her decision. She was worried that to Leave the EU would lead to economic decline. She had heard with Brexit that the pound would go down, and this was the crucial factor for her to vote Remain saying: “and look now, that is exactly what has happened already”. She argued that it was a safer choice to vote for Brexit, for the UK, was already a part of EU, and people did not know how it would be to not be a part of the union.

The rest of the jogging group voted for Brexit. Whilst discussing immigration in Wigan, Caleb claimed that it was not a big issue. In Wigan, immigrants who work and live are only 2.9 percent compared with the nationwide figure on 11.5 percent. Only 1.7 percent of those living in Wigan were born in an EU country (Higgins, 2016). Caleb did not see the vote to leave the EU as an uncritical or selfish act. It was more about the need to feel materially connected to traditions and cultures, to feel loyal to memories and the past despite personal and historical transformations. For many, the referendum was not about forging or embracing new neoliberal identities, but about maintaining identities with character. They wanted to taking care of the countries character and values (Balthazar, 2017, p. 223).

When Caleb and I went to “The Pub to Be” to have conversation we were discussing topics like how he felt about the health and school systems. For him it was difficult to say so much about the school system since both his daughter and grandson were adults. But he told me that around the Wigan area it was all government schools. This indicates the working class nature of the area but also the way community solidarity is formed early on through shared childhood backgrounds. Caleb only used the national health service and personally he was happy with it. No one in the group participated in the private health system. However, he also thinks the NHS is too busy and overrun these days. There is not enough funding and not enough staff. Yet he was quite satisfied over the treatment he received when he had been to a doctor lately. Caleb described how there was a big public debate about whether the national

health system was working well or not. Whilst some praise it, others claimed it was deteriorating rapidly and, on the way down. The declining nature of the national health system became part of the debate about Brexit, with Boris Johnson promising that the wasteful money given to the EU would now go into the national health service. Though this was stated in the national press, it was re-echoed by the jogging group members and their support for Brexit. When interlocutors spoke about Brexit, it was about regaining control of state expenditure, of state borders and everyday life. Interlocutors were wary of being accused of racism and so they often claimed they were not opposed to particular groups or nationalities coming in, but that too many were coming in, overwhelming the nation's ability to cope. Caleb summed up his view about this:

I was only going after the facts that I was told on the news. With the money they were giving to Europe, it was said they would have 350 million pound a week to put back into the national health system. What we give to Europe to be in EU, and that we could now give it in to our own state expenditure priorities. And also, with immigration, because the country can only tax so much and with immigration it is to many people who needs tax payments. People needed to be coming in control, but they seem to lose control of it. The NHS became a bit overstretched. Again, not anything against the immigrants, it does not matter which country they come from, but they were getting overstretched, the system. Because everything is limited. And the government seemed to have lost control over it. I also felt that we were losing control over other things as well. Just little things like our own laws. So, this is my reason for voting Leave in the referendum.

Caleb explained why he voted for Leave in terms of the government and the national losing control over their own institutions, money, laws and immigration intake. He also thinks that British justice has been overturned by European courts and will continue to be overturned by decisions from other countries. All the things that Caleb talks about are part of his national identity and he defend its boundaries, history, culture and sociality. This is a growing difference between this national construction of citizens versus becoming a cosmopolitan international citizen. Caleb argues that he does not have anything about the immigrants, but when the immigrants come he feels that there are already too many people in the country and with more people in the country there is a need for more of everything. There is too much

competition and the government are experienced as not capable of offering enough for everyone and so he wants to take back what he calls “the control”, which is him taking care of his own identity.

Fredric told me that he voted for Brexit because of growing health, and housing problems. He believed too many people were now fighting over the same government provided resources, which were becoming scarcer and harder to access. He especially, thought there were too many Polish people in the UK, and too little space for them. He claimed not to be against people from Poland, but he thought that there were too many of them fighting over the same things as the British people. According to National Statistic, Polish people are the biggest non-UK EU group in the UK. In 2014, there were 853.000 Polish people in the country (*BBC*, 2016c).

The first time I met Fredric he told me that despite how he voted for Brexit, he was not a racist. However, in one of our later meetings, he did open up more:

Through the year I have become a racist, and that is because of all the foreigners that is coming in to the country. I was not a racist before, but because of the issues in the country I became one now.

It is this swing to the right by the working class that is interesting. Whereas before it was wary of being accused of racism and some still are wary, many no longer care and openly embrace ethnic-national hostility and rivalry as a necessary part of contemporary reality and its politics. When immigrants are coming into a country the citizens who already live in the country expect that the immigrants will make an effort to follow existing norms and rules. Both in England and Norway, many feel threatened by other people who come into the country and threaten the imagined moral community. In both countries a sense of increased competition with other people when it comes to welfare money leads many to be hostile to immigrants (Gullestad, 2002, p. 59). Existing the citizens experience many immigrants as not trying enough to integrate into their newly adopted country and this provokes attitudes such as Fredric’s and those documented by Gullestad (2002, p. 59).

Nancy came into the conversation when we were talking about immigrants. Her husband is a driver license assessor, and people from foreign countries sometimes tried to bribe him to give them a driver license. She explained: “It is their culture (bribery), and they

are taking their culture into this country”. Fredric added: “imagine me going to a foreign country and bribing them to get my wish fulfilled”. Fredric also noted foreign people’s clothes, that: “they are using things in front of their face, that is so impersonal”. He believes that when migrants come into a new country they should be better able to adapt to it. Much of this discussion echoes debates about migrants in Norway which indicates the global European dimension of national popular resistance to immigration. Cultural incompatibility, a refusal to assimilate and adapt are common arguments used against migrants. The other issue is the way, women’s modesty, her use of head scarves and facial coverings are transformed into a denial of individuality, into a critique of foreign culture that does not give sufficient place to the personal and the individual. These become western national properties that need to be defended from a cultural onslaught.

May 22. There was a foreign suicide bomber who blasted himself and killed many people in a concert arena in Manchester. Events fuel many people’s hostile attitudes and suspicions of foreigners. In the next section I will outline this event and how this created all kinds of fears for my interlocutors.

### **How terror creates fear**

During my time in England, there were three terror attacks in the country. The first one was in London and involved a man driving a car into pedestrians on Westminster Bridge. The second was a suicide bomber in Manchester. The third was in London, a car that drove into people. The latter occurred only two weeks after the attack in Manchester. My interlocutors did not talk too much publicly about the two attacks in London. It seems like it was not a big shock because of the previous terror attacks in France and Belgium. I remember that on the TV in the charity shop, the attack was shown repeatedly. They also showed repeatedly a picture of the perpetrator and one staff commented: “why do they have to show this all the time? It is not a big news because this is the same that just happened in France”. It was this normalisation of terror, of unpredictable violence that many responded to. People were more in shock after the Manchester attack, because it was regarded as local, it occurred only 35km away from Wigan.

On May 22, 2017, at a concert by the performer Ariana Grande in Manchester, 22 people were killed and 59 were injured (Dodd, Pidd, Rawlinson, Siddique, & MacAskill, 2017). A Libyan born man in his 20s had detonated a suicide bomb at the end of the concert,



when everyone was leaving. In the aftermath it has been proven that this man had connections with the organization IS. In the days after the police did a lot of investigation to see if there were more people connected to this attack. The perpetrator's father was linked to the attack (Dodd, et al, 2017). In Wigan, they arrested a man two day after the incident. The police thought that he could be involved in the planning of the attack. The newspapers have written very little about this, so the nationality is not known for certain, but many assumed it was a close relative. In Wigan, following the attack we could see more police in the streets and there were police on horses in the middle of the town centre. The houses around the area where the arrested man lived had to be evacuated for some hours while the police conducted a bomb research.

The arena where the incident happened is connected to a train station from where most of the trains to and from Wigan depart and arrive. The day after the terror attack no trains used this station. The arrests, house searches and evacuations, heavy police presence and the disruption of everyday transport meant that many of my interlocutors were in shock. They also identified closely with Manchester and indeed when they were travelling overseas many of my interlocutors usually told people that they were from Manchester. People overseas were more likely to know Manchester than Wigan. The first time I met the jogging group after the terror attack they told me: "Kirsty, did you see that they arrested a man in Wigan? It is crazy!" Kimberly noted: "People have been making wars for many years, but I have never seen anyone saying: "Yeah, we did win the war! Now everything will be better". Such comments viewed the terror attack as going beyond the logic of normal warfare, that it could not be normalised as an act of war, that something new and abnormal had emerged. The fact that it was linked to foreigners added to people's sense of insecurity that the normal boundaries of violence had been transcended.

None of my interlocutors or any one closely related to them had been to the concert. Some of their children did go to school with people who were hurt in the concert. This is how one person put it: "it is so weird that it is happening this close to us. And especially that they are arresting people in Wigan. It is scary". In this jogging group, compared to the other groups, they did not say so much about the person who did this. They did not want to give the attacker attention. They wanted to focus on the poor people that were hurt, the poor kids that were at the concert. How this could happen this close. They were looking at Manchester and Wigan as two peaceful places. I found more comments in the charityshop: "People who did this should not come into the country. The border controls should become stricter", and other

comments like: “it is scary to think that the person who did this had been living in the country”. This was also discussed in the cycling group where one of them asked me: “Kirsty, do you have any idea of what we can do to stop all this bombing?” Another person in the cycling group told me: “I hope you will continue travelling, it is important to continue to live our life. If we are letting the fear stop us they will win”. For those supporting Brexit, it was not surprising that these attacks were happening in England, and this made them sure that they had taken the right choice when they voted to leave in the referendum.

The incident happened late in the evening, I remember waking up to newspaper full of stuff about the incident. They were writing about the man who did it, his nationality. Later when they found out more they wrote about other people who were arrested, and the network of ISIS people that lived in the area. They described how the suicide bomber had recently been in Libya, his home country, and that in his apartment there had been found equipment for making bombs (Dearden & Kentish, 2017). The local newspaper in Wigan, which also was an online edition [wiganoday.net](http://wiganoday.net), had a lot of updates, especially on its Facebook page. There people could leave comments on newspaper updates that invariably voiced their anxieties, fears and anger. Many wanted a more restrictive immigration policy to curb the arrival of potentially dangerous terrorists. For one week after the bombing, it was the main news. Every day, more information was publicised about the suicide bomber and the rest of the people in his network. There were interviews with people who were his kin and who were in shock that he could do anything like that. Memorial places for the victims emerged in Manchester, but also in Wigan. This was especially so for the Ariana Grande concert victims. The event evoked strong social solidarity in the town, racial solidarity and the reassertion of national belonging, and of whiteness.

The opinions that my interlocutors have in the jogging group about immigrants are not unique but widely shared in Wigan, the UK and indeed throughout western Europe where right wing nationalism is growing among the working class. This right wing popularism is fuelled by terror attacks but also by austerity welfare cutbacks and growing unemployment.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

In the UK there is produced a new tension between the two sides of politics, the Left Wing and Right Wing. After spending time with both of them at their meetings I could see how those tensions had occurred, and this is something I sought to explain in chapter 2 by look at their attitudes to new immigrants. The parties on the Right Wing played up nationalist attitudes and were very concerned that too many immigrants were coming to the country and in doing so threatening British identity, culture and society. They were blamed for many of the problem economic problems in the nation including unemployment, unaffordable housing, poor medical services and high student fees. In response, the Left Wing parties became focused on discussing how to decrease the growth of racism. They saw this as a global problem, especially with Donald Trump election as president of the USA. In the thesis I have spoken about the growth of right wing parties over the last couple of years, and how this concerns people who share the views of Left Wing parties. I have taken this further by writing about cosmopolitan attitudes (chapter 3), which I especially found to be strong among my younger interlocutors who have another perspective on class relations, immigrants and participation in Europe, than what my older interlocutors had. Using my own ethnography, I argued that it was that it is more difficult for the younger generations to explain where they fitted in to the class system than it was for people who are a part of the older generation. Here I use Bourdieu's classic work on class to show how the different classes form different habitus. I showed that my younger interlocutors see themselves more as European than English and seek to protect that strong bond and link with other European countries.

In chapter 4 I use work inspired by Foucault, namely Mitchell Dean, Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller to explain how government is using new technologies for governing individuals. Here is use my ethnography to document how those on welfare who receive job allowance money have been subjected to new forms of surveillance and discipline. The new rules for accessing welfare mean that recipients need to prepare themselves in way so as to show that they are motivated and disciplined for a working life. In contrast, of British born people can be more readily access the welfare state and they claim not to be stressed about finding a job. My interlocutors did not mention them receiving welfare as a problem, but foreign people who were receiving welfare money were seen as a problem.

In chapter 5 I took up Sheldon Wolin's term *managed democracy* and *inverted totalitarianism* to explain what my interlocutors mean when they claim the EU is not democratic. They experience EU elections to be fixed, and the reason for this is mainly because the differences between the national election in the UK and the EU election are great. People do not experience much of an election campaign for the EU parliament, and when they do not get enough information they do not have an impression or a sense that they have participated in an election.

In the last chapter (chapter 6), I used Marianne Gullestad's analysis of egalitarianism in Norway and more especially how "imagined sameness" works to create the distance between people. Those whom you perceive yourself as culturally similar to, as like-minded *likhet*, are the basis of national belonging and they are different to others, who are often other ethnic groups. Gullestad do analyses how cultural nationalism shapes the experiences of people who are immigrants, and how they can often have this label for the rest of their life no matter how long they have been in the country.

Through the thesis different social, cultural, economic and political aspects have been analysed to understand why the Brexit referendum lead to a victory for the Leave campaign which was a surprise for many, but maybe even more surprising for the people who voted Leave who did not expect to win. By going in to the EU in the 70's, Thatcher started her neoliberal policies, which resulted in cuts to manufacturing and mining. This made a change in the class system since people had to change their work, something that again produced change within the political parties. Many post-industrial towns voted Leave and those towns still struggle today economically, almost forty years after the de-iustrialisation. Citizens seek to find reasons for why their lives have been transformed and they take up the divisions between the native people and immigrants. This history helps explain why many British people voted Leave in the referendum.

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