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## Narrations of Homogeneity, Waning Welfare States, and the Politics of Solidarity

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Routledge  
2019

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Keskinen , S P , Skaptadottir , U D & Toivanen , M 2019 , Narrations of Homogeneity, Waning Welfare States, and the Politics of Solidarity . in S Keskinen , U D Skaptadottir & M Toivanen (eds) , Undoing Homogeneity in the Nordic Region : Migration, Difference and the Politics of Solidarity . Studies in Migration and Diaspora , Routledge , Abingdon , pp. 1-17 . <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315122328-1>

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<http://hdl.handle.net/10138/308660>

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315122328-1>

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# Undoing Homogeneity in the Nordic Region

Migration, Difference, and the Politics of Solidarity

**Edited by**  
**Suvi Keskinen, Unnur Dís Skaptadóttir and Mari Toivanen**

First published 2019

ISBN: 978-1-138-56427-5 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-12232-8 (ebk)

## Chapter 1

**Narrations of homogeneity, waning welfare states, and the politics of solidarity**

*Suvi Keskinen, Unnur Dís Skaptadóttir and Mari Toivanen*

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# 1 Narrations of homogeneity, waning welfare states, and the politics of solidarity

*Suvi Keskinen, Unnur Dís Skaptadóttir and Mari Toivanen*

Cultural heterogeneity, and grounds for a politics of solidarity that would connect the “imagined communities” (Anderson 2006) of today’s nation-states, have become core questions in European politics. Across Europe and including the Nordic region, we have witnessed the rise of right-wing populism that builds its political agenda on ideals of cultural homogeneity, claims of diminished social cohesion, and security threats posed by migrants and racialised minorities. The emphasis on problems of difference and demands for stricter policies relating to immigration and integration, have by no means been restricted to the far right. Scholars have identified a “crisis of multiculturalism” discourse (Lentin and Titley 2011) or a “backlash against multiculturalism” (Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010), circulating among large sections of the political centre-right and parts of the left, as well as among many prominent journalists and intellectuals. The shift towards (demands of) cultural homogeneity, neo-assimilatory politics, and security measures would not have been possible without the active participation and rebranding of political rhetoric by the broader political field. As Lentin and Titley (2011) argue, public debates about multiculturalism and cultural differences are often ways to address questions of race, power, and privilege in a hidden way, in times when racism is treated as an outdated and awkward topic not to be explicitly engaged with. In this book, we investigate the historical and societal context within which the claims of the far-right parties become understandable—instead of viewing them as totally alien or exceptional phenomena, we see them as radicalised extensions of more accepted and normalised ways of thinking and acting. We also argue that new configurations of solidarity are needed in European politics, which would replace ideas around homogeneity/sameness and reformulate notions of social justice to include migrants and racialised minorities that are today increasingly portrayed as the “undeserving Others”. New politics of solidarity needs to acknowledge the histories and currents of colonialism and depart from an understanding of social justice that incorporates and seeks to repair the experiences of cultural and economic injustices.

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This book provides a critical approach to the narratives of cultural homogeneity and social cohesion that are usually taken for granted in the understandings of societal security in the Nordic region. The perception of the Nordic countries as exceptionally homogeneous in relation to culture and population is widespread in academic, administrative, and public discussions (Alghasi, Eriksen, and Ghorashi 2009; Keskinen et al. 2009; Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2012; *Ryymän* and *Schmidt* in this volume<sup>1</sup>). Cultural homogeneity is often portrayed as one of the central reasons for the Nordic countries' high level of social cohesion<sup>2</sup> and—by extension—the high level of societal security in the region. Societal security in this sense refers to society's capability to preserve its essential characteristics in the face of actual or imagined threats. National and regional identities have become central to understandings of societal security, the maintenance of which is seen to depend on the preservation of experienced social cohesiveness and togetherness, that in turn legitimise the welfare state.

In this book, we trace the historical emergence of narratives of exceptional homogeneity and examine how governing of differences relates to the securitisation of migration in the Nordic region—a tendency interconnected with common trends in Europe (e.g. Guild 2009; d'Appolonia 2012), but with contextual specificities within the countries studied here. The contributors illuminate how normative understandings of cultural homogeneity neglect the histories of transnational migration and ethnic minorities within the region, as well as bypassing the colonial appropriation of land, and the assimilation policies towards the indigenous peoples in the Arctic. The book aims to answer the following questions:

- How are national identities in the Nordic countries developed around notions of cultural homogeneity, and what kinds of histories have created such understandings?
- What are the (ethnicised and racialised) presumptions of the idea that cultural homogeneity promotes societal security?
- How do welfare state policies and practices seek to manage and govern cultural/religious/racial differences?
- Which differences are seen as (cultural, economic, political) threats and become security problems, while others do not?
- How are migrants, minorities, and targeted local actors resisting securitisation processes, and creating alternative narratives from their viewpoints?

Compared to earlier studies on cultural homogeneity and migration in the Nordic region, this book elaborates three new perspectives. First, we not only investigate the historical trajectories of taken-for-granted notions of cultural homogeneity across the Nordic countries, but also detect how these are intertwined with ideas of race and racial homogeneity as part of nation-state

formation. Second, the book deconstructs ideas of cultural homogeneity by focusing on indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities with a long-term presence in the region, *together with* post-1960s migrants and their descendants. This contrasts with previous research that has discussed (the governing and perspectives of) these groups separately. Third, we understand the histories and current societal processes of the Nordic countries to be shaped by (post) colonial relations. In contrast to dominant discourses, the Nordic countries participated in colonial endeavours in many ways, outside Europe and within the region (Keskinen forthcoming; Kuokkanen 2007; Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2012; Körber and Volquardsen 2014). These ignored histories continue to affect relations between the indigenous populations and the Nordic nation-states, as well as the perceptions and exclusionary processes encountered by migrants from the non-‘Western’ world, and their children, in today’s Nordic societies.

### **Ideas of exceptional homogeneity, nation building, and race**

Historical narratives of the post-1960s transnational migration that presuppose initial homogeneity as a central characteristic of the Nordic countries are prone to depicting growing migration as a potential threat. Embedded in such narratives—either implicitly or explicitly—is the idea that the national sovereignty and cultural identities of the Nordic states are being eroded by a greater level of cultural diversity, that is then seen to be undermining the countries’ level of social cohesion, and consequently their societal security. If (cultural) homogeneity is seen as a foundation for, or a precondition of, a well-functioning welfare system, then increased migration—by leading to greater cultural, ethnic, and racial heterogeneity—logically threatens that system, or at least is a problem that has to be dealt with.

However, all Nordic countries have been diverse in many ways, as documented in the growing body of historical research and literature on multiculturalism (e.g. Kivisto and Wahlbeck 2013; Skaptadóttir and Loftsdóttir 2009; Sandset 2019), as well as the chapters in this volume. The social, cultural, and ethnic heterogeneity of Nordic societies was readily acknowledged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century nation-building processes and policies. It was considered to be something that threatened the societal integrity of the nation-states, and thus was to be overcome through diverse assimilatory and/or integrative policies. This was not least evident in the building of the welfare systems, designed to overcome class and regional differences through equalisation.

The idea of ethnic and cultural homogeneity is thus more a product of nation-building processes, than a description of actual existing conditions. As David Theo Goldberg (2002, p. 33) argues, “ethnoracial, cultural and national homogeneity is sustained throughout modernity, not because it is the natural condition”, but because it is the ideal kept alive and imposed on

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heterogeneous groups of people “through repression, occlusion and erasure, restriction and denial, delimitation and domination”. For Goldberg, homogeneity is part of the ordering of the modern state, notably about the regulation of social, economic, and cultural relations, and the governing of populations defined in racial terms (*ibid.*, p. 110). Modern states have also, in varying ways, managed and sought to secure the conditions for economic production, expansion of capital, and reproduction of labour. The processes of homogenisation are thus as much about power over resources and distribution of wealth, as they are about cultural hegemony and normative understandings of the ‘people’ and ways of living.

Nation-state building in the Nordic region differs to some extent among the individual countries. While Sweden and Denmark have been the region’s dominant states for centuries, having ruled over what is today known as Norway, Finland, and Iceland, the latter three countries gained independence in the wake of the nationalist movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Nevertheless, as the contributions in this book show, all Nordic countries have promoted ideas of being exceptionally homogeneous, ignoring and denying assimilatory and repressive state actions towards indigenous people and ethnoracially defined minorities.

The nation-states in the region have historically sought to manage and deal with existing differences in multiple ways. The appropriation of land, and subsequent erosion of livelihoods, have seriously affected the indigenous Sámi and Inuit people, while expulsion, restriction of movement, and interventions into family life have targeted the Roma and Traveller minorities (*Helakorpi*). Racial and ethnic categorisations—including racial biology—have been used to define and inferiorise indigenous people and several minorities. Compared to these, assimilation policies may seem less severe, but they have resulted in the silencing of identities and local histories, as well as cultural and linguistic erasure (*Siivikko, Ringrose, and Stubberud*). Since the 1970s, Norway, Sweden, and Finland have adopted multicultural policies in their efforts to respond to cultural heterogeneity that has become hard to ignore (*Ryymän*). Since the 1960s and 1970s, indigenous people and ethnic minorities have organised to struggle for their cultural and land rights, both in dialogue and in conflict with different state policies. The post-1960s migrants and their children have also mobilised in civil society to make their voices heard.

Notions of “exceptionalism” also refer to the perceived outsider position that the Nordic countries are often thought to have in relation to colonialism (Keskinen et al. 2009; Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2012; Sawyer and Habel 2014). However, recent research has shown that Danish colonialism stretched from the Caribbean to West Africa, East Asia and the Arctic (Jensen 2015; Körber and Volquardsen 2014), while Sweden had minor colonies in North America, the Caribbean, and West Africa. The colonisation of Sápmi, the land of the Sámi people, crosses the national borders of Norway, Sweden, and Finland. While Iceland was not in possession of colonies, it has strongly identified with

European history and modernity (Loftsdóttir 2017). Compared to the British, French, or Dutch empires, the Nordic countries may have been “small time actors” (Naum and Nordin 2013) in overseas colonialism, but they actively participated in and benefited from the unequal economic, political, and cultural relations developed during European colonialism—a position that has been described as “colonial complicity” (Vuorela 2009; Keskinen et al. 2009). When these histories are combined with knowledge of Nordic colonialism in the Arctic, it becomes clear that the Nordic countries were in multiple ways involved in colonial endeavours, both as “accomplices”, but also as active colonial powers (Keskinen, forthcoming).

The chapter in this book by Teemu Ryymin uses social science texts to examine how and when the notion of Norway as a particularly homogeneous society was established. Ryymin detects the rise of a narrative that portrays a dramatic shift from an ethnically homogeneous country, to increasing diversity following labour migrations of the early 1970s, and refugee migrations since the 1980s. Ryymin shows how claims of exceptional homogeneity are at odds with the historical experiences of cultural, linguistic, ethnic, religious, and social diversity in Norway. The chapter analyses the silencing of the histories of Sámi people and several ethnic minorities, due to Norwegian assimilation policies, and the social democratic welfare state project that sought to equalise class differences from a universalist standpoint. Moreover, Ryymin discusses the impact of racialisation, when distinctions are made towards migrants from non-‘Western’ countries.

Garbi Schmidt analyses the ‘myth’ of ethnic homogeneity from a local perspective, focusing on two neighbourhoods in Copenhagen. She investigates the history of Danish national symbols, and the stories that hold together the notion of a “homogeneous” nation. Contrasting the narrative of homogeneity with the actual diversity in these two neighbourhoods at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Schmidt argues that Denmark and its citizens were engaged in networks of communication that exceeded the space of the nation-state. Ethnic and cultural homogeneity cannot be evaluated by investigating only the number of immigrants; instead, a broader view that addresses the transnational social, political, financial, and cultural connections of the country is needed. The chapter further examines perceptions of homogeneity and heterogeneity in the two neighbourhoods today, showing that such understandings are deeply racialised, and that homogeneity is conflated with whiteness.

In her chapter, Niina Siivikko examines Sámi representations in the Finnish media during the 1960s and 1970s. The chapter focuses on a period called the “Sámi Renaissance”, referring to the revival of Sámi culture after harsh assimilation policies that nearly led to the extinction of Sámi culture in Finland. It is not coincidental that the Sámi defended their cultural and land rights during a time when many other indigenous peoples and racialised minorities were involved in similar struggles around the world. Siivikko examines mainstream Finnish newspapers, arguing that the role of the Sámi

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within the nation was ambiguous. At times, the Sámi people were treated as part of the Finnish nation, while they were otherwise thought to be in the process of becoming part of the nation. Sometimes, they were even considered to not want to become Finnish. The “Sámi Renaissance” meant the voice of Sámi cultural activists became stronger, and a new identity politics was developed that built on a spirit of solidarity to provide greater visibility to Sámi demands.

Priscilla Ringrose and Elisabeth Stubberud analyse how two documentary films about old and new minority groups in Norway position themselves in relation to the Norwegian “national fantasy”. The documentaries explore issues of national identity and belonging in relation to the Kven and the Norwegian-Pakistani communities. Both films reflect on the assimilationist policies of the Norwegian nation-state towards ethnic and racial minorities, but adopt different ways of positioning themselves to majoritarian and minoritarian perspectives. The documentaries revolve around family stories, bringing to the fore questions of gender, generation, and Norwegian state interventions in the arena of family life. Ringrose and Stubberud interpret the two films as being in dialogue with each other, suggesting that the Kven documentary contains both a symbolic warning and a promise to its Norwegian-Pakistani counterpart.

### **Nordic welfare model and social cohesion**

The link between social cohesion and cultural/ethnic homogeneity in different societies, and the long-term consequences of migration, have been widely explored in recent research literature. Putnam’s 2007 article ‘E Pluribus Unum’ created a controversy when it suggested that there are negative effects within ethnic diversity resulting from migration to “Western” societies (Putnam 2007; Morales 2013). The last decade has witnessed a heated debate among scholars, and a growing body of research has evaluated the “threat” hypothesis put forward by Putnam. Indeed, one of the central questions in this literature has been whether the increased ethnic and cultural heterogeneity resulting from migration to a given society leads to the erosion of social cohesion in that society. Scholars have examined, for instance, the relationship between increased ethnic/cultural diversity and its potentially weakening effect on reciprocity, participation in volunteering, social capital, social trust, and solidarity in different societies (Koopmans, Lancee, and Schaeffer 2015; van der Meer and Tolsma 2014 for a summary of these studies). Whereas some have confirmed (to a certain extent) Putnam’s hypothesis, others have shown that racial inequalities, segregation, and economic and social precariousness are more consequential for social cohesion and trust, than ethnic diversity (see *ibid*; Uslaner 2012).

The debates in Nordic research have been similar to those in the United States and continental Europe, in that they have also included contrasting views on whether the link between social cohesion and increased diversity



resulting from migration is negative or positive (Delhey and Newton 2005; Larsen 2013; van der Meer and Tolsma 2014; Goldschmidt 2017). The studies have also examined, for instance, the attitudes of the white majority towards government-funded welfare to migrants living in the Nordic welfare states, known for their universalistic approach to social policies. The majority population's willingness to accept migrant and minority groups as legitimate members of the welfare community has been considered to be central to the social cohesion of that society (Goldschmidt 2017). Whereas the Nordic countries may share some elements of their welfare models, they have had quite different approaches concerning immigration and integration policies. These have ranged from more restrictive models of inclusion in Denmark, to more liberal approaches in Sweden (Brochmann and Hagelund 2012), and somewhere in-between for Norway, Finland, and Iceland. However, in recent years, the policies have converged towards stricter measures in all countries. Furthermore, the Nordic countries have in the past decade witnessed increasing political and public debate about who is deserving of social welfare benefits, and who is not. Keskinen, Norocel, and Jørgensen (2016) discuss how welfare chauvinistic claims—that is, how the white majority population is seen to deserve welfare benefits, more so than migrants and racialised minorities—have become policy matters, influencing welfare practices in the aftermath of the 2008 global recession.

What seems to be characteristic of debates (and research) on social cohesion, both in the Nordic countries and elsewhere, is the conflation between heterogeneity and migration: the heterogeneity of a given society is framed in terms of an increased number of racialised migrant groups, without reference to indigenous people or existing national minorities. This can lead to the often-implicit assumption that national societies before 1970s migrations were more or less culturally homogeneous. This can also come with a certain level of normativity, when social cohesion that is associated with an alleged lack of ethnic diversity is considered to be a desirable state of affairs. Increasing heterogeneity through migration has been approached as a potential problem and threat for the societal and political order, to be resolved through the integration of the migrant 'Others'. Indeed, Hickman, Mai, and Crowley (2012) suggest that the phenomenon of social cohesion should not be approached through the normative and functionalist models of social cohesion that contain an essentialist understanding of what constitutes a "good society". Instead, the authors show that "local hierarchies of social entitlement and mobility, the acknowledgement of transnational affiliations, belongings and histories of diversity and/or homogeneity are all constitutive of social cohesion" (p. 10).

Another underlying premise in social cohesion literature seems to be that only the nation-state is the basis of social cohesion and the provider of resources (see Delanty 2000). In other words, cultural homogeneity, social cohesion, and the "problem of integration" have been approached through the nation-state frame, both in policymaking and research (see Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2003). Migrants, although coming from outside the national

space, could not be excluded from the emerging welfare systems in Europe in the post-Second World War period, since the emergence of the welfare systems was closely linked to the labour market the migrants became part of (ibid, p. 310). Post-war immigration studies, especially in Europe, focused upon the consequences of immigration to national welfare systems, and how this related to the question of integration. Indeed, Bommers and Thränhardt (2010) suggest that the way migration is conceptualised and the “problem of migration and integration” is rearticulated, is rooted in the different histories of nation building. They argue that “paradigms of migration research” are “rather scientific re-articulations of nation-state specific ways to constitute international migration-related problem constellations” (ibid, p. 29).

Therefore, it is important to question the normative understandings of cultural homogeneity and social cohesion—and to problematise the implicit assumption of the nation-state as their frame of reference. Similarly, in debates that conflate cultural homogeneity with social cohesion, difference/heterogeneity needs to be approached in a way that does not overlook the histories of transnational mobility, indigenous people, and ethnic minorities. And finally, there is a need to critically examine the implicit link between social cohesion and cultural homogeneity, particularly in Nordic societies where cultural/ethnic/racial homogeneity has been part of the historical and present-day narratives of national identity.

The development of the welfare state in the Nordic region was tightly connected to the nation-state and notions of homogeneity. From the 1930s, Sweden led the way in developing what became known as the Nordic or the social democratic welfare model (Esping-Andersen 1990), combining redistribution policies, comprehensive welfare benefits, and social services, in order to enhance class and regional equality. The Swedish social democrats made the notion of *folkhemmet*—literally, the people’s home—the basis of their political ideology. *Folkhemmet*, originally a social-conservative nationalist idea, presented the Swedish people as a unified and homogenous entity under the shared familial roof (Norocel 2013, p. 139). From the beginning, kinship ties and common origins were thus part of the welfare state ideology, the aim of which was to create social cohesion and reduce class differences understood as the root of conflict.

The “golden era” of the Nordic welfare states gave way to neoliberal policies from the 1980s onwards. The economic recession of the following decade provided grounds for politicians who argued for welfare cuts and privatisation in the name of competitiveness, efficiency, and reducing welfare costs (Pyrhönen 2015, pp. 24–25; Keskinen, Norocel, and Jørgensen 2016). With the shrinking welfare state came the reduction of available political means, and the will, to decrease social divisions and govern economic fractures. The economic crisis of 2008 led to austerity politics, especially in Iceland and Finland. The welfare state that developed as a national project to reduce economic differences and promote class solidarity now seems to be a threatened project—this is due to neoliberal policies, but also waning class solidarity when the economic redistribution element no longer benefits lower

income groups, and the support from the middle class simultaneously hovers. While the idea of the welfare state still receives broad popular support in the Nordic countries, in practice, privatisation policies and increasing socio-economic divisions have become characteristic for these societies (e.g. Schierup, Hansen, and Castles 2006; Kamali and Jönsson 2018).

In this political and economic climate, migration from non-“Western” countries in particular has become perceived as an economic threat. At the same time, migrants and racialised minorities form a large part of the low-paid workforce essential for the Nordic economies and welfare states. While migrants from post-socialist countries face certain advantages in comparison to groups racialised as “non-white Others”, they can still lack employment opportunities, and be inferiorised in relation to the majority population (*Kri-vonos*). Even today, social exclusion and economic inequalities are treated as challenges to social cohesion, but now they include a clearly ethnicised and racialised angle. In public debates, the threat is located in racialised residential areas, and especially in their young non-white residents (*Dahlstedt*). The Roma and Traveller minorities—who have a long history in the Nordic region—also suffer from economic disadvantages but are largely defined in public through cultural difference (*Helakorpi*). In dominant discourses, economic threats thus seem to be connected more to the post-1960s migrants and their children, than to older minorities or indigenous peoples.

In this book, Jenni Helakorpi examines the ways in which professionals identifying as Roma and Travellers working to promote the basic education of these groups, make sense of the practice of “provision of knowledge about Roma and Travellers”. This chapter challenges the view that providing knowledge about minoritised groups would be enough to promote justice in education; instead, a more thorough institutional transformation that includes continuous interrogations of power relations is needed. Helakorpi argues that although professionals seek to use their knowledge about Roma and Travellers to problematise ingrained processes of racialisation, they are not able to totally avoid contributing to the very same discourses. The chapter connects the production of knowledge about Roma and Traveller minorities to state policies and public discourses about Roma people more generally, which differs across the three studied Nordic countries. Recent state recognition of historical atrocities seems to provide space for narratives of discrimination and abuse to be included in basic education knowledge.

The chapter by Magnus Dahlstedt focuses on the problematisations of suburban youth in racialised residential areas in Sweden. In media coverage, suburban youth are seen to pose a serious threat to the social cohesion of Swedish society: stories of burning cars and stones thrown at police and rescue vehicles present the urban peripheries as the locus of social disorder and disintegration. Dahlstedt’s analysis departs from the local level, investigating the views of local authorities and the youth themselves. Dahlstedt shows that the authorities view the “area of exclusion” and its inhabitants as

causing the problems of social exclusion. On the other hand, the youth in these racialised suburbs focus on the mechanisms of social exclusion, and the interventions that would be needed for change. New articulations of social exclusion emerge when the suburban youth challenge others' perceptions, and call for societal responsibility in tackling exclusion.

Daria Krivonos analyses how Russian-speaking migrants positioned as unemployed draw on a racial grammar to legitimise their place in the Finnish welfare system. Krivonos relates these processes to the Finnish context, where welfare chauvinist and neoliberal ideas of “deservingness” and “undeservingness” are widely circulating in the public sphere. Krivonos argues that the boundaries of deservingness and entitlement for welfare benefits are racialised and interconnected with the idea of whiteness. Her analysis suggests that through the reproduction of notions of non-white Others as workshy, young unemployed Russian-speaking migrants construct not only their whiteness but also their belonging to a form of neoliberal citizenship that has stigmatised unemployment.

### **Securitisation policies and crimmigration**

After the end of the Cold War and initial optimism about the opening of borders, a growing emphasis has been placed on security and military concerns in Europe. At the same time, the notion of security went through a transformation, where the constitution of threat and security measures were redefined and expanded. Whereas hostile states and communism were formerly viewed as primary security threats to national territory, mobile populations and racialised minorities are now regarded as threats requiring the policing of borders (Fassin 2011; Ibrahim 2005). The focus has thus moved from the state to the individual, reinforcing the connection between security and migration/migrants. With global neoliberal capitalism and the declining welfare state, securitisation has become a central way to deal with perceived differences within nation-states. While formerly perceived to be beneficial for the expansion of capitalism, migrants have now come to be regarded as a threat to the conceived homogeneity of the population and the maintenance of the welfare state (Fassin 2011; Ibrahim 2007; Faist 2004). These transformations are reflected in various policies characterised by the strengthening of border controls, transnational surveillance networks, and internal security measures that include the surveillance of minority populations. In the aftermath of 9/11 in 2001, the so-called migration–security nexus was reinforced and, as part of this, societal security was even more strongly connected to cultural, religious, and political issues. Perceptions of migrants as a threat to cultural identity or as criminals are not entirely new, but such discourses have been reinforced and expanded in the past two decades (Togral 2011; Aas 2011; Faist 2004).

According to the Copenhagen School, securitisation refers to a discursive practice. Something becomes understood as a security threat when it is claimed by the state or a dominant actor to be a threat that needs to be

tackled, regardless of whether it is a real threat. Thus, securitisation is seen as the successful discursive construction of an issue as a threat, which validates what measures are taken against it (Floyd and Croft 2011; Diez and Huysmans 2007; Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998). On the other hand, the Paris School defines an understanding of securitisation focused on discourses to be insufficient, and instead emphasises the necessity of also encompassing bureaucratic practices—the effects of security technology, and professional security knowledge. For these critics, securitisation consists of different policy issues that enable the conveying of security knowledge, skills, and technology (Diez and Huysmans 2007). Following Foucauldian ideas, surveillance is understood as a form of governmentality. In the chapters of this book, we can see how *both* discourses on migrants as a threat to the Nordic homogenous societies *and* policies and practices related to such notions affect the way racialised minorities are treated (see *Thapar-Björkert et al., Dahlstedt, Alghasi, Himanen, and Tryggvadóttir*).

Nordic and European migration policies are institutionally linked to crime and criminality. This is reflected in policies and transnational cooperation in relation to asylum and immigration, and in national policies and institutions such as the criminal justice system. The intertwining of crime control and immigration control is an important part of contemporary surveillance networks, not only of borders, but also within nation-states (Aas 2011; Fekete and Webber 2010). This merging of crime and immigration (crimmigration) in law and in crime and migration control, is also revealed in public debates and practices of police on migration, and in transnational border surveillance networks (Aas 2011). Surveillance and security discourses are connected to citizenship, belonging, and global privilege, as well as social exclusion, and Othering of migrants and minorities. This is reflected in recent research depicting how the policing of minorities and racialised groups—such as undocumented migrants, asylum seekers, and Roma migrants—are linked to crime control and immigration control regimes (Aas and Bosworth, 2013; Fekete and Webber, 2010). Thus, although migrants and their descendants are the main targets of contemporary security systems and databases, these measures are also extended to other minority groups, such as the Roma, “whose standing as full citizens is in doubt” (Aas 2011, p. 339; *Himanen*). In the Nordic countries, the indigenous Sámi and the Roma people have extensive experience of racialisation and securitisation, as depicted by this book’s chapters by Siivikko and Helakorpi. Roma people, in particular, seem to be portrayed in relation to crime and security, even today.

Ibrahim (2005) shows how these security discourses are racist discourses. Connecting migrants with forms of cultural difference that threaten existing ways of life (including being a burden on the health and welfare system), and lead to social breakdown, is in fact a modern form of racism, as it becomes a criterion for exclusion. The resulting discriminatory actions towards migrants and minorities based on ideas of danger is racism. Migrants and racialised minorities have increasingly become scapegoats for economic problems and

crimes in the Nordic countries. This is reflected in public debates, in which the connection is made between migration and criminality, and the ethnic, racial, or religious background of the perpetrator functions as an explanation of crime (Keskinen, 2014; Loftsdóttir 2017).

In their chapter, Suruchi Thapar-Björkert, Irene Molina, and Karina Raña Villacura examine how a shifting political discourse—from welfare to warfare—has led to the increasing securitisation of Swedish suburbs with a high proportion of racialised minorities. This has occurred in the context of growing neoliberalism and cuts in welfare services, while the penal sector, surveillance, and racial profiling has been strengthened. The chapter shows how crimmigration has taken place in the suburbs the authors investigate, leading to a rising perception of the inhabitants as potentially dangerous. The police are increasingly present, and body searches without motives are becoming more common. The authors describe how the participants in their study respond to the security discourse, and the demonisation of their neighbourhoods in the media discourse.

Markus Himanen examines criminalisation of immigration, through focusing on the public and private policing of vulnerable and marginalised people from Romania and Bulgaria, living as street workers in Finland. The chapter also contributes to research on the position of the Roma minority, to which many of the interviewees belong. Moreover, the study is based on interviews with police officers and third-sector experts. Himanen shows how the street workers are commonly met with criminalising and securitising policies. They experience ethnic profiling; arbitrary surveillance; being stopped by the police and security guards on a regular basis; as well as being frequently evicted from public spaces. This leads to stress and humiliation among the street workers. The police frame them as a threat to the general public's feeling of safety, and in terms of criminality, linking mobility and criminality.

Sharam Alghasi analyses the changing debates about migration in Norway in the aftermath of the 9/11 attack, with new narratives about Islam in which Muslims have come to represent the potential enemy within. This discourse is repeated in the many terrorist-related stories about Muslims that have dominated the Norwegian media. He interviews participants with Muslim backgrounds in his study, examining their responses to these narratives as represented in a film about radical Muslims. He shows how the participants distance themselves from violent and reactionary portrayals of Islam and Muslims in the documentary, the media, and society at large. They perceive media practices related to Islam and Muslims as reductionist, and express being surrounded by a state of stigma and Islamophobia in their everyday lives. Moreover, they reject the reductionist image of being a Muslim that excludes other dimensions within their identities.

Helga Tryggvadóttir examines the securitising discourse on asylum seekers arriving in Iceland, arguing that the media discourse about them is both racialised and gendered. Although asylum seekers are few, they are seen as arriving in large numbers, while being undocumented and unknown. As

demonstrated in the chapter, securitisation discourse of asylum seekers in Iceland seeps into public and political discussions, in which the discourse of criminality, cultural clashes, and potential terrorism intertwine. Tryggvadóttir examines how statements in the media, and official reports, link asylum seekers to terrorism, focusing on the threat they present (for example, because of a lack of identification papers, which is framed as a sign of criminality), while negating the risks asylum seekers face. Tryggvadóttir depicts how authorities spread dubious “knowledge” about asylum seekers, invoked by racialised images. On the other hand, asylum seekers attempting to become “known” in this society can also wield this notoriety as a strategy, to contest the authorities’ decisions about their cases.

### **Towards a new politics of solidarity**

This book provides a critical approach to the notions of cultural homogeneity, social cohesion, and societal security that circulate in the Nordic societies. Through historical analyses, the contributions show how the idea of exceptional cultural homogeneity was developed through activities by social scientists, nationalist politicians, journalists, and cultural actors, among others. This process has, however, not been univocal nor without challenges. The production of a “homogeneous nation” was achieved through repression and assimilation of indigenous peoples and ethnoracially defined minorities living within the nation-state borders. While we emphasise the need for historically and contextually specific analyses of such processes, it is evident that there are continuities between the past ways the indigenous peoples, the Roma, and other minorities were treated, and the situations the post-1960s migrants and their descendants face today in the Nordic nation-states. Likewise, these differences relate to the histories of colonisation, differential categorisations in racial hierarchies, and changes in political economies. Nevertheless, an examination of *both* indigenous people (such as the Sámi) and “old” ethnic minorities (such as the Roma, Travellers, and Kvens) *and* the post-1960s migrants and their descendants, is useful in exposing the heterogeneity of the “people”, as well as the homogenisation processes through which states and political movements seek to control, regulate, and exclude such heterogeneities.

These questions have become especially pressing in the wake of the waning welfare states and neoliberal policies that erode the fiscal basis of redistributive policies and services, but also the (class) solidarity project that has carried the welfare state and formed the basis for its “social cohesion”. That migrants and their children—notably those racialised as “non-white Others”—are increasingly blamed for the erosion of the welfare state (which in fact is a result of several decades of neoliberal policies), can be interpreted as a sign of an exclusionary form of politics of solidarity (Ålund, Schierup, and Neergaard 2017). It seeks to reserve welfare only for those perceived as “deserving” and “white enough” to belong to the core group, to which

solidarity is restricted. Those not perceived to belong to this core group to which solidarity applies, are targeted by securitising policies, surveillance methods, and punitive measures. Such groups include recent migrants and asylum seekers, but also the racialised populations living in poor suburban city areas, and ethnic minorities within and across borders, such as the Roma.

The current societal condition in the Nordic region, and more broadly in Europe, calls for other kinds of politics of solidarity—solidarities that are not based on expectations of cultural, ethnic, or racial homogeneity and their related exclusions; solidarities that acknowledge the histories and currents of colonialism; and solidarities that depart from an understanding of social justice that incorporates and seeks to repair the experiences of cultural and economic injustices, be they the result of unequal global power relations, policies towards indigenous or minority groups with a long residence within the Nordic region, or class structures. This means taking distance from functionalist views on “social cohesion” that build on essentialising notions of shared ethnic, cultural, or racial backgrounds, and instead approaching the togetherness needed in current societies through a politics of solidarity. The contributions in this book provide space for narratives that build on the histories and experiences of indigenous people, ethnoracially defined minorities, migrants, and asylum seekers (*Siivikko, Helakorpi, Dahlstedt, Ringrose and Stubberud, Thapar-Björket et al., Himanen, Alghasi, Tryggvadóttir, Schmidt*). They also raise questions about solidarities across cultural, ethnic, and racial divides. A careful reading shows moments, movements, and collaborations in which new forms of the politics of solidarity can, and are, taking shape.

## Notes

1 In the following, we use italics to refer to contributions in this book.

2 Social cohesion is most commonly understood as a sense of togetherness and of common social norms (Demireva 2012).

## Acknowledgements

This book is a result of the Nordic network *Multiculturalism, Cultural Homogeneity and Societal Security* (NordHOME), funded by the Nordic Joint Committee for Nordic Research Councils in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NOS-HS) in 2016 to 2018. We thank NOS-HS for the possibility to organise the exploratory workshops that provided the grounds for this publication. Suvi Keskinen (projects 275032 and 316445) and Mari Toivanen (project 287667) also wish to thank the Academy of Finland, whose funding made the work with this book possible. Unnur Dís Skaptadóttir expresses her acknowledgements to the Icelandic Research Fund (Rannis, project 163350–053). We also thank all those who gave lectures and presented papers at the NordHOME-workshops for inspiring thoughts and discussions. Most of all, we miss Helga Tryggvadóttir, who passed away at the late stage of the



preparation of this book. We remember her as a thoughtful, intellectually ambitious, and kind colleague, who did not fear to take part in public discussions on migration and migrants' rights.

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