Twitter Thread by Chris Smaje

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So I'm probably taking this discussion about 'nationalism' on Twitter with @nealjclark1 @AnarContrarian & @RizomaSchool way more seriously than I should, but it prompts me to say a little more about nationalism & localism – and why I don't want to mix them up ■

We all know people, things, practices, locations & memories in places special to us that we feel emotionally connected to, give meaning to our lives & that we wish to cherish & protect...

...yet most of us are part of a modernist culture inherently scornful of such attachments, albeit happy to giftwrap them & sell them back to us as nostalgia if it can.

So I agree with @AnarContrarian that rural people's children & grandchildren were functionally confiscated from them – in fact, I'd go so far as to say that in many ways modernist culture has functionally confiscated us from ourselves

Nationalism is part of this modernist culture. Its force comes from taking those powerful emotions we have about people & places we know, & sprinkling people & places we don't know with the same emotional fairy dust...

...giving politically powerful people and capital cities an aura of legitimacy that they haven't earned.

All too often the ersatz localism of nationalist ideology tries to create a sense of a locally threatened silent majority divided from a demonized minority – racial, ethnic, linguistic, religious, gendered or whatever...

But the threat to local connectedness is invariably greater from the constant profit-seeking economic transformation of nationalist-modernist projects than it is from the heterogenous ranks of ordinary people wanting to live their lives and enchant the places where they live.

In many places nationalist-modernist ideology has been so effective that neither incomers nor those with deep local roots have much access to economic or cultural resources outside that ideology, so localness easily becomes another shallow form of status in pointless culture wars

So I’d argue that the main challenge now is to invent or renew local economic and cultural resources beyond the nationalist-modernist status quo in ways that likely include whoever happens to be in place.

There will be a lot of people on the move in the world to come. Nationalists will tell us that they are our main enemies. But they probably aren’t.

So – Twitter conventions aside – I’m not going to make life easier for nationalists by applying the term to local things that matter culturally and emotionally

In other words, it ain’t where you’re from, it’s where you’re at

Hopefully it’s clear that none of this is a criticism of the folks involved in this discussion earlier, whose work I admire and who certainly don’t fit into the nationalist-modernist mould ■

And now I'm going ice-skating. Or at least I would if there was ever enough frozen water in the place I call home