

## Editorial Thinking National, Thinking Spatial

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Dennis Pringle  
National University of Ireland\*

Oren Yiftachel  
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev\*\*

During the last two decades, studies of nationalism have virtually exploded to occupy a center-stage in both social sciences and the humanities, spawned by the seminal works of the likes of Ernest Gellner, Anthony Smith, Benedict Anderson, Eli Kadouri, and Eric Hobsbawm. Yet, despite their illuminating insights and breath-taking endeavor, most nationalism studies remain relatively broad and abstract, collapsing too easily nation and state, and devoting only scant attention to the role and impact of intra-national diversity.

Most striking has been a certain blindness among leading scholars of nationalism to issues of space. Despite the centrality of territoriality, borders and spatial socialization to the construction of 'the nation', most theorists of nationalism have treated the national space as 'flat' and unproblematic, overlooking the immense impact of its terrain, internal division and the development process.

But geographers, for their part, have had their own blind spots. Only rarely did they venture to join the interest in nationalism and ethnic studies which has engulfed the social sciences and the humanities. Geographers largely remained under the Anglo-American paradigm which privileges economics, class, gender, and environmental issues. Telling examples of this are the various collections of 'classical' papers in human geography, published during the 1990s, which rarely include chapters on nationalism, ethnicity or race.

However, in recent years all this has begun to change. Building on pioneering works which began to appear sporadically during the 1970s and 1980s, geographers in the late 1990s are fully engaging with nationalism, ethnic relations and studies of identity. And likewise, scholars from the humanities and the social sciences have discovered space in a large way, and have, in turn, energized the imagination, concepts and methodologies of geographers. The present volume is happily joining this trend and presents a cutting-edge spatial perspective on nationalism.

Most of the papers in this volume were originally read at a conference in August 1998, on the theme 'Nationalisms and Identities in a Globalized World' organized on behalf of the International Geographical Union's Commission on the World

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\* Geography Department, National University of Ireland, Maynooth, County Kildare, Ireland.

\*\* Department of Geography and Environmental Development, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer Sheva, Israel.

Political Map by John O'Loughlin (University of Colorado), Gearóid Ó Tuathail (Virginia Polytechnic), Peter Shirlow (Queen's University, Belfast), and Dennis Pringle (National University of Ireland, Maynooth). The main paper sessions were held in Maynooth, County Kildare, Republic of Ireland, whilst field-excursions were organized in Dublin, the Irish border region and in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Although the conference attracted more than 50 delegates from about 15 countries, the fact that they were mostly drawn from Europe and the English-speaking world tended to reduce the diversity of outlooks which could have informed the discussions on such an important topic. It is a recurring irony that those who suffer most from the negative aspects of nationalism and political violence frequently tend to be under-represented at international conferences organized to discuss the subject. The explanation is no mystery: although former Yugoslavia, Northern Ireland, Israel, and the former USSR provide notable exceptions, political violence largely tends to be a feature of the underdeveloped world where academics, especially those who might be critical of their political leaders, are less likely to be funded, or even permitted, to travel to international conferences.

The papers read at the conference addressed its main theme from a variety of perspectives: some theoretical, others more empirical. A full list of the paper titles, abstracts and even the full text of most of the papers can be viewed on the conference website at <http://www.may.ie/ig>. The papers in this volume are revised versions of those that adopted a more theoretical perspective on nationalism and national identity. Other papers read at the conference dealing with reterritorialiation and European nationalism will be published in issues of the journals *Geopolitics* and *GeoJournal*, respectively.

The present volume contains six papers that travel the seamline of geography and social theory, and present a rich texture of spatial statements on the problematic of nation and state in our present, globalizing, epoch. We begin with two papers which 'peel' the mystical layers constructed by nationalists, who often present nations as existing 'naturally' since time immemorial. The two unpack the mechanisms and practices from which a national consciousness develops. In the first, Anssi Paasi takes us through a detailed exposition of the detailed social practices and discourses which shape and reproduces the nation, focusing on the education system and military in Finland as illustrative examples. Tessa Morris-Suzuki continues to take us on a historical journey, analyzing what she calls 'the national mobilization of memory'. But, she notes, this mobilization is increasingly challenged by new spatial perspectives which transcend the taken-for-grantedness of the nation-state.

The other four essays continue to challenge the dominance of the nation-state as 'the' prime focus of collective politics, economics and identity. Gertjan Dijkink explores the diverse intellectual bases of classical nationalism and examines their links with the gradual ascendancy of supra-national frameworks, especially in Europe. Lynn Staeheli takes a further step in the exploration of changing political structures by looking at the impact of globalization on the changing scales of politicized space, by focusing on the new multi-layered 'spatialities of citizenship'.

The fifth essay, by Adriana Kemp, critically excavates the perceptions and discourses which construct the meaning of frontiers and borders. Kemp shows convincingly how ethnocentric perceptions among Jewish leaders of Israel fueled the project of frontier settlement beyond the state's borders. But despite physically undermining the concept of a territorially contained nation-state, Israeli leaders continued to talk in the language of state-nationalism, thereby prolonging their control over Arab territory. Finally, James Anderson and Douglas Hamilton deconstruct systematically the moral and instrumental logic of what they call 'the nation-state ideal'. They discuss flawed attempts to offer 'national solutions to national problems', as exemplified in Northern Ireland. This leads them to advocate new forms of governance in which democratic transnational institutions would straddle territorial state borders.

The essays all show the great value of 'thinking spatial' for the understanding of the connected topics of nationalism, state and the world changing political order. But despite the insistent discourse of globalization and mobility, let us also remember that the daily life of the vast majority of people around the world is still shaped by their local and immobile reality, bounded by boundaries, state-nationalism and ethnic spatialities, or in short, by their political geography.

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