Nationalism

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Abstract

The chapter defines key terms before going on to examine various manifestations of nationalism, using Benedict Anderson's (Imagined communities, 2nd edn. Verso, London, 1991) conception of "imagined communities" as a guiding thread. The first section, entitled "National Space and Time," looks at how "using 'nations' as the building blocks of history" (Streets. Empire and the nation: institutional practice, pedagogy, and nation in the classroom. In: Burton, A. (ed) After the imperial turn. Duke University Press, Durham, 2003, 58) shapes perceptions of the past, present, and future that tend to privilege narratives of national cultural homogeneity over those of movement, intermixing, and exchange. The second section, "Imagining the Community," discusses how local and national definitions of community can be mutually reinforcing and help to entrench ethnonational categories. The third section, "Nation and Museum," goes on to look at how nations are represented, but also subverted, through the medium of museums, whereas the final section examines the mutually constitutive concepts of "Nation

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and Migration” in light of ongoing migration to Europe. The chapter concludes that a critical approach to nationalism studies is necessary in order to question and challenge an ideology so pervasive – in the form of patriotism, for example – that its underlying assumptions tend to be taken for granted.

Keywords

Nationalism · Imagined communities · Ethnonational · Museum · Nation · Migration · Criticality · Ideology · Patriotism

Introduction

Patriotism is one manifestation of nationalism, which is a pervasive and protean ideology. Patriotism is often presented as nationalism’s positive face, or even completely distinguished from nationalism’s atavistic tendencies (Viroli 1995). Such distinctions, however, ultimately turn on value judgments that seek to rescue patriotism from nationalism’s negative connotations. Michael Freeden (1998) described nationalism as a “thin” ideology with a limited number of core principles, chief among them prioritizing the nation. The nation, in turn, is a slippery and contested concept that has been defined in many ways, from a “politically-mobilized people” (Alter 1985, 16), through an “imagined community” (Anderson 1991), to a “named community possessing an historic territory, shared myths and memories, a common public culture and common laws and customs” (Smith 2002, 15). It is important to distinguish the nation from the state, especially as the concepts are often used interchangeably in common parlance. The nation denotes a form of cultural community and belonging distinct from the institutions of state. It is possible to conceive of a nation without its own fully fledged state; Quebec, Scotland, and Catalonia are the most commonly cited examples. Nevertheless, it is not for nothing that the term “nation-state” tightly binds the two concepts together.

Nationalism dominates the contemporary global order as the organizing principle that divides the world into bounded nation-states. As such, the nation serves to legitimate states across the world today. Nation-building, understood here as state-led nationalism, serves to maintain the national construct. Nation-building describes the moment when nationalist ideology becomes “banal” or hegemonic “common sense” and how that is maintained, as encapsulated in a nation-state. State-led nationalism can manifest itself in many forms, from patriotism, through nativism, to chauvinism, and is conveyed through many channels, including education systems, memorials, and museums. As a “thin” ideology, nationalism can effectively be “thickened” or combined with elements from other ideologies. Nationalism may be combined with conservatism, liberalism, and socialism, for example. Indeed, any political leader or party appealing to a nationally bounded people or electorate conforms to the core principle of nationalism cited above, namely, prioritizing the nation. Although commentators have long pointed out that the Left has been relatively unsuccessful in harnessing nationalism to its cause (Viroli 1995;

Bragg 2006; Hunt 2016), it is far from a bourgeois preserve. Early analyses of the Brexit camp's victory in the UK's 2016 EU referendum and Donald Trump's successful US presidential campaign later that year have tended to focus on how these resonated with working class voters (among others) who responded to promises to "Make America Great again" and "Take Back Control [of the UK]." Again, these are nationalist statements in that they exemplify its core principle of prioritizing the nation (Freeden 1998). What is more, these campaigns made a virtue of "Othering" outsiders, who were often defined in national, ethnic, or racialized terms.

A key feature of nationalism is that it is inherently exclusive; it creates an imagined national community and draws a dividing line between "Us" and "Them," or the in-group and the out-group. Importantly, this imagined line does not necessarily equate to an actual territorial border, and the in-group is often not imagined as it exists in reality. On the contrary, nationalism may simplify distinctions into crude, ethnonational categories. National chauvinism can be defined as a further variant that not only prioritizes the nation but professes a sense of superiority over other nations. This may be expressed using the religious terminology of God's chosen or blessed nation, for example (Billig 1995). It is often easier for nationalists to define their nation in terms of what it is not, or what they would like it to be, than what it actually is. For example, a country may be de facto culturally diverse, or multicultural, but the "normative response to that fact" (Parekh 2002, 6) could range from political and ideological multiculturalism to racialized nativism. The latter view is exemplified in the infamous poster that the then UK Independence Party (UKIP) leader Nigel Farage unveiled during the Brexit campaign in June 2016, featuring a long line of Middle Eastern migrants and the slogan "Breaking Point."

Much as the distinct concepts of nation and state are often employed interchangeably in everyday language, and the adjective *national* is used to describe affairs of state, so the terms nationality and citizenship are often taken to mean the same thing. Nationality, properly understood, is an expression of belonging to the nation, whereas citizenship is a legal status linked to the state (European citizenship flows from member state citizenship). The distinction turns on whether citizenship "is an abstract legal status or subject to cultural definition" (Ho 2013, 147). That is, citizenship is very often imbued with markers of nationality. Citizenship tests and oaths of national loyalty, for example, are designed to measure a degree of integration into the nation that goes way beyond signing up to a bundle of legal rights and duties, but it is highly questionable whether these mechanisms can actually ever reflect national belonging (Sutherland 2012). In practice, many people's approach to citizenship is instrumental, as demonstrated in the wake of the Brexit referendum by the sudden flurry of British applicants for citizenship of a remaining EU member state. In the Asian context, Aihwa Ong (1999) has documented how entrepreneurs build up the residency requirements to provide themselves and their families with desirable passports. Many countries also explicitly recognize citizenship as a commodity, by guaranteeing it to large investors, for example, or those who create a defined number of jobs. As Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) note, nationality for members of a diaspora does not always amount to full citizenship, but encompasses a limited number of rights and benefits to encourage financial, political, and cultural ties that benefit the "home" country (Barabantseva and Sutherland 2011). The link between citizenship and nationality – or naturalization and integration – is thus not as strong as may first appear.

The following sections build on the above definitions to examine various manifestations of nationalism, using Benedict Anderson's (1991) conception of "imagined communities" as a guiding thread. The first section, entitled "National Space and Time," looks at how "using 'nations' as the building blocks of history" (Streets 2003, 58) shapes perceptions of the past, present, and future that tend to privilege narratives of national cultural homogeneity over those of movement, intermixing, and exchange. The second section, "Imagining the Community," discusses how local and national definitions of community can be mutually reinforcing and help to entrench ethnonational categories. The third section, "Nation and Museum," goes on to look at how nations are represented, but also subverted, through the medium of museums, whereas the final section examines the mutually constitutive concepts of "Nation and Migration" in light of ongoing migration to Europe. The chapter concludes that a critical approach to nationalism studies is necessary in order to question and challenge an ideology so pervasive – in the form of patriotism, for example – that its underlying assumptions tend to be taken for granted.

National Space and Time

In his rightly celebrated book, *Imagined Communities*, Anderson conceives of the national imagined community as in opposition to the medieval Christian belief that God was orchestrating events according to His own divine plan, imagined temporally in terms of "an idea of simultaneity [that] is wholly alien to our own" (Anderson 1991, 24). Anderson evokes an era when it was not deemed incongruous or anachronistic to see local church benefactors depicted in biblical scenes, religious frescoes, or stained glass windows, "because the medieval Christian mind had no conception of history as an endless chain of cause and effect or of radical separations between past and present" (Anderson 1991, 23). But Anderson's evocation of the nation as a "solid community moving steadily down (or up) history" (Anderson 1991, 26) is disturbingly monolithic, implacable, and ignorant of individual difference and inequalities of power. It assumes the intimacy of a national space that is actually racially inflected and ethnically hierarchical, and it does not question who is equipped or allowed to share in that national space (Kelly 1998). Partha Chatterjee (1996, 2005) long ago critiqued Anderson's (1991, 24) assumption that a non-chronological understanding of time had been completely superseded and that his readers all shared a "conception of simultaneity" regulated by clocks and calendars. As Chatterjee (2005, 927) put it: "People can only imagine themselves in empty homogeneous time; they do not live in it [. . .] It linearly connects past, present and future, creating the possibility for all of those historicist imaginings of identity, nationhood progress and so on." In contrast to this conception of time, Chatterjee (2005, 928) argued that the "real space of modern life is [. . .] heterogeneous, unevenly dense [and] 'other' times are not mere survivals of a pre-modern past:

they are new products of the encounter with modernity itself." The imagined community as Anderson portrays it, however, continues to play an important role in structuring politics and people's lives across the world.

Anderson (1991, 12) is not arguing that nationalism overtook religion but that an idea of simultaneous, homogeneous empty time did. This conception of national progress along linear time is indeed how many people imagine the world of nation-states today, namely, as bounded polities moving forward together. However, both Partha Chatterjee and John Kelly argue that this ignores "other" (non-Western) conceptions of time and seriously underplays the impact of colonization, for example. According to John Kelly (1998, 868), Anderson ends up contributing to views of modernization as developing states "catching up" with Western capitalism and entrenches a "fictitious global genealogy" instead of highlighting "asymmetries in global flows." Kelly (1998, 844) also points out that Anderson's idea of the nation as "horizontal comradeship" ignores racial hierarchies. This applies both within nations such as Fiji – which Kelly uses as a case study – and between nations, such as the relationship between the former British empire and its colonies. Like Chatterjee, Kelly charges Anderson with failing to reflect these lived realities. He asks: "Where and when, exactly, was global space-time imagined to be homogeneous and empty?" (Kelly 1998, 866). As recent studies of British history based on archaeological evidence have shown (Olusoga 2017; Tolia-Kelly 2010), for example, Britain was already multicultural in Roman times, populated by north African legionnaires and settlers from Hadrian's wall to the Kent coast. This fact undermines notions of national purity and homogeneity which are easily associated with national communities imagined in such a way as to exclude difference.

Categorizing peoples and framing histories in national terms is a common, everyday practice. It is embedded in education curricula worldwide, forming part of the "cultural baggage of our upbringing" (Sharp 2009, 15). The historian Keith Taylor (1998, 949) has developed an alternative approach using Vietnam as a case study, and his analysis is worth quoting in full:

> If we can clear our minds of "Vietnameseness" as the object of our knowledge and instead look carefully at what the peoples we call Vietnamese were doing at particular times and places, then we begin to see that beneath the veneers of shared fields of sounds and marks, or of however one may refer to mutually intelligible languages and writings, lay quite different kinds of peoples whose views of themselves and of others was significantly grounded in the particular times and terrains where they dwelled and in the material and cultural exchanges available in those times and terrain. If we speak of these peoples as oriented toward the surfaces of their times and places rather than as oriented toward an imagined unifying depth, we will shift the effects of our ideological intent upon the archive away from the figurations both of univocal national narratives and of multivocal regional narratives contextualized by the nation.

This analysis suggests that nationalist principles – such as the special status of the native and the importance of preserving cultural attributes associated with a majority against "dilution" by a minority – had to be established and inculcated into populations that were probably completely unfamiliar with them. Taylor acknowledges that nations and nationalism are constructed around narratives of belonging and othering, but points out that there are many ways to belong. He critiques the methodological nationalism that unquestioningly starts from the nation as an analytical category and equates it with culture or society, projecting it back through time to apply it anachronistically to the past. Taylor's work (1998, 953) set out to "disorganize the nation" by challenging nationalist historiography. Whether experienced as liberating or frightening, it is certainly disorienting to imagine history as disconnected and fragmented, not to assume heritage and genealogy to be constitutive of identity, and to be "uprooted" from such certainties. Today, ethnonational categories and labels impact on each one of us individually. They structure the world around us, influencing our perspectives, relationships, and wider social hierarchies. This practice is so pervasive that it often goes unquestioned.

Keith Taylor (1998, 953) imagines the past not as a precursor of the present but as something radically different. The key idea is fluidity, whereby change is an integral part of political space, and not an outside threat to national unity that should be resisted and repelled. According to this reading, foreigners may come and go, found legitimate dynasties, and collaborate for mutual benefit in shifting, "shared fields" (Ho 2013, 164). What if the present could be considered in the same way, without the need to fit it into a national narrative? Social science theorists have long cautioned against "methodological nationalism" (Beck and Sznaider 2010 [2006]) and "methodological groupism" (Brubaker 2002) in the study of social relations. These approaches take bounded, homogenous nations or ethnic groups as the starting point of analysis and assume they are capable of collective action. Yet the nation-state framework is so pervasive that this is difficult to countenance. Ridding ourselves of terminology like "France," "Paris," and "L'Elysée" as shorthand for a collective national actor requiring no further introduction is hard. Geographers have long recognized this as a "territorial trap" (Agnew 1994), however, and have been influential in developing more performative understandings of territoriality (Painter 2010). Anthropologists too are imagining human (power) relations as "tangles" (Ingold 2007) or "knots" (Green 2014), in order to escape the limiting mental map of bounded "imagined communities." Critical international relations theorists are also challenging the dominance of the nation-state in their discipline (Ni Mhurchu and Shindo 2016, 2). Clearly, there are useful ways of sidestepping groupism and undoing assumptions of common bonds. For example, the concept of the neighbor (Painter 2012) infers none of the commonality inherent in the concept of community that is so central to nationalism and is discussed further in the next section.

It is imperative to place the well-trodden, nation-building path of bordering, forgetting, and exclusion in historical context, specifically imperial attitudes toward (un)civilized society. As Antoinette Burton (1998, 9) already noted long ago, postcolonial historians of Empire "question the legitimacy of a national history that views the non-white populations of the late twentieth century as fallout from the disintegration of empire rather than as the predictable outcome of centuries of imperial power and engagement." In the same way, a critical approach to nationalism studies questions apparently "common sense" assumptions around nationalism and the nation-state. For example, the evocation of the nation as an "imagined community" in official discourse rarely represents immigrant diversity as interwoven with or integral to underlying notions of local and national community. Rather, immigrants are regularly called upon to adopt or assimilate German, Dutch, or British values, among many others. Nation-states still dominate both academic and popular understandings of political community, and yet the interdisciplinary field of nationalism studies does not have a well-developed critical tradition. Twenty years after Michael Billig's *Banal Nationalism* (1995) and Rogers Brubaker's *Nationalism Reframed* (1996), there is no established academic discipline of Critical Nationalism Studies to parallel those of Critical Border Studies, Critical Migration Studies, or Critical Terrorism Studies. Critical nationalism studies should be concerned with countering bias toward the nation-state theoretically, methodologically, and empirically. It should address the enactment of and resistance to the nation, nationalism, and the nation-state and consider alternative theoretical, methodological, and empirical models that are not derived from the concept of nation. Finally, critical nationalism studies should have a global reach and be explicitly committed to exploring non-European perspectives. Above all, it should push for "imagined communities" to be more self-reflective about their own construction and ask, following Keith Taylor, whether it is possible to step outside the "limiting and violent" (Barabantseva and Lawrence 2015, 913 fn. 8) categories of race, ethnicity, and nationality.

Imagining the Community

Benedict Anderson's book of essays entitled *The Spectre of Comparisons* (1998) rejected Eurocentric bias in favor of adopting Southeast Asia as a "ground of comparison." Anderson used the metaphor of looking through an inverted telescope to illustrate how the colonial period and his own European background had both colored his perception of Southeast Asia and its "imagined," constructed contours. Anderson's approach did not entail a simple one-to-one comparison between Europe and Southeast Asia. Rather, it started from the premise that Southeast Asia today is haunted or shaped by its European colonial legacy. The spectrality of the European legacy and its haunting of Southeast Asian understandings of sovereignty and nation-building are also taken up in Partha Chatterjee's critiques of Anderson's work. In Chatterjee's (2005) view, so-called Third World nationalism is not subject to the same logic of seriality and classification that Anderson posits as nationalism's universal grammar. Further, an Asian perspective suggests that studies of nationality should consider enduring spiritual and cultural dimensions alongside political and ideological facets. Not only does this reintroduce parallel and often conflicting notions of space and time, as discussed in the previous section, but it also questions how the concept of imagined community is translated. The notion of translation is fundamental to comparative politics, which puts concepts into different contexts in an attempt to compare "like with like." This premise is particularly problematic when burdened with the uneven power relations inherent in certain concepts, such as nationalism. The politics of translation draws attention to how the power associated with specific languages reflects that of certain social hierarchies and the definition of cultural groups. It analyzes the way in which "[t]ranslation can be productive or destructive, by inscribing, erasing or redrawing borders; it is a process, political par excellence, which creates social relations and establishes new modes of discrimination" (Mezzadra and Sakai 2014, online).

Nevertheless, Benedict Anderson (1998) drew on his Southeast Asian expertise to make a plea for the essential goodness of nations based on their appeals to the welfare of innocent future generations, the sacrifices of fallen ancestors, and the best intentions of the living. Anderson (1998, 368) argued that each of these elements:

> in a different but related way shows why, no matter what crimes a nation's government commits and its passing citizenry endorses, My country is ultimately Good [sic]. In these straitened millennial times, can such Goodness be profitably discarded?

Elsewhere, Anderson (1991, 143) sought to distinguish the ultimate selflessness and good intentions of nationalism and patriotism – which he defined as "political love" – from the depredations of chauvinism and racism. Evoking the "moral grandeur" of dying for one's country and the openness of nation-states to naturalizing immigrants (Anderson 1991, 144), he argued that "nationalism thinks in terms of historical destinies, while racism dreams of eternal contaminations" (Anderson 1991, 149). Adopting a similarly positive stance, Anderson's erstwhile pupil Pheng Cheah has argued that the nation was not originally conceived as a closed, atavistic community. Rather, it was one of "a continuing series of territorialized and deterritorialized models for realizing freedom" (Cheah 2003, 6) that has since been derailed by state-sponsored capital and nation-building. Cheah (2003, 8) therefore argued that "nationalism is also a universalism because both it and cosmopolitanism are based on the same normative concept of culture [. . .] understood not as ideological indoctrination, but as a cultivational process where universal ideals are incarnated in the daily practices of a collective's individual members." It is to the daily practices of this community, both imagined and real, that we now turn.

Anne-Marie Fortier (2007) links patriotic love to community belonging, showing how small-scale communities are often used as a proxy for the imagined national community. The concept of community is frequently and uncritically invoked in public discourse, not least in the oft-repeated argument that migration threatens community cohesion. It is used in local, national, and international contexts and is just as slippery as the notion of nation. In practice, government and media representations of national cohesion often draw on local communities' experience of proximity, intimacy, and face-to-face contact as "national character models" (Herzfeld, cited in Fortier 2007, 107), in a process whereby local communities are "scaled up" to be representative of the nation-state. As Valerie Walkerdine notes, however, many studies of community – imagined or otherwise – do not pay enough attention to the power of emotion in creating and holding them together. Some recent analyses of nationalist atmospheres do try to grasp the emotional pull of nationalism, thereby approaching the phenomenon more in terms of the feelings and moods it elicits than the ideological principles it represents (Closs Stephens 2016; Merriman and Jones 2016). These studies pay attention to the "vibes" that circulate among objects (including people) as much as the objects or symbols of nationalism themselves. They also move on from understanding nationalism in binary terms, as either "hot" or "banal" (Billig 1995), to thinking about nationalism as latent and flickering (Merriman and Jones 2016).

Walkerdine's (2010, 103) own study of an anonymized "Steeltown" in Wales showed how the residents created a kind of protective barrier around their community; they were reluctant to move away or bring their private sorrows into the open for fear of creating conflict and losing their identity, their comfort in life, and their sense that "we are all belonging to one another." Respondents felt intimidated by and distrustful of movement into or out of the community, which was "seen as a threat to the way things were, the sense that it was safe, you know everyone and therefore you knew who you were" (Walkerdine 2010, 107). It is not hard to see how this tight-knit sense of community could be scaled up to the national level, not least because local communities are often used to exemplify the concept of national integration. As Michael Billig showed in his book *Banal Nationalism* (1995), the mundane or banal is central to the politics of belonging, and this sense of belonging is clearly derived from people's lived experience. As such, renewed attention to the personal, emotional, and psychological aspects of banal nationalism moves "from the sociology of encounter as a mundane or casual meeting between strangers, towards a sociology of reconfiguration, one in which the social is integral to the political" (Hall 2015, 854). In Michael Herzfeld's words (2016, 32), this serves to "restore awareness of the social, cultural and political grounding – the cultural intimacy – of even the most formal power."

Despite being a "thin ideology" (Freeden 1998), nationalism is still among the most pervasive in the world; it not only serves to legitimate a global political order organized into nation-states but also individuals' attitudes toward security, immigration, humanitarian aid, and many aspects of their everyday lives. Michael Herzfeld (2016, 36) notes that "because national ideologies are grounded in images of intimacy, they can be subtly but radically restructured by the changes occurring in the intimate reaches of everyday life." Localized practices of community formation can reproduce, challenge, and fuel official nation-building discourse. The emerging field of research into conviviality analyzes how everyday togetherness happens and how people live with difference (Nowicka and Vertovec 2014). The normative element in conviviality research emphasizes mutual respect and the "joyful aspects of spending time connecting" (Nowicka and Vertovec 2014, 349). This reveals a tendency to equate conviviality with positively connoted sociability and to contrast it with intragroup conflict, thereby underplaying the constraints and maintenance work inherent in belonging to a community. In turn, national "topologies of association, meaning, feeling and remembering" (Merriman and Jones 2016, 14) that become embedded in people's way of life through socialization, repetition, and familiarization affect natives and long-term residents alike. Nevertheless, just as there are ways to step outside the theoretical constraints of national community, so it is also important to imagine the everyday outwith the nationalist frame. Maja Povrzanovic Frykman and Michael Humbracht (2013) focus on how objects create continuity, as opposed to community, in migrants' lives. Reading objects in this way means they retain their emotional charge and are constitutive of identity (such as family heirlooms or tastes of childhood home) without being framed as nationally symbolic. A remembered recipe need not be described as a Romanian delicacy, and a coffee habit picked up in Italy is not necessarily a cipher for that country's national culture. Rather, they create a sense of "hominess" or homeliness bound to an individual's history and *chosen* identity, not their place of birth, genealogy, or any other ethnonational markers.

Nation and Museum

Museums have always been and continue to be key nation-building sites (Anderson 1991; Aronsson and Elgenius 2015) as well as contested sites of identity in themselves. This applies not only to national museums but also to maritime museums, migration museums, and any other museums that purport to represent an aspect of the nation's history or heritage. In the museum context, Elena Stefanou (2012) identifies three important elements, namely, the embodiment of national heroes as a core element in national identity, their place among the living, and their portrayal in a continuous present – that all go against Anderson's notion of a bounded territorial nation progressing down a linear history. As discussed in Section one, framing the nation as part of a continuous present may be a more fruitful way of approaching national heritage than assuming it is part of a past that can be remembered and preserved, but not relived day by day. On the contrary, the renewed rise of nationalist politics in Europe suggests that the colonial experience and the racialized hierarchies it created are indeed being relived day by day in former colonial powers as well as their erstwhile colonies. Antoinette Burton (2003, 4) and other critical historians like her have "recast the nation as an imperalized space [rather than] a falsely homogeneous whole," but note that this has yet to be officially acknowledged in France, Britain, and elsewhere (Garton-Ash 2016; Chaudhuri 2016; Lefeuvre 2008).

European museums interpret their nation's colonial past in different ways. For example, France and the UK are addressing the slave trade as one aspect of their colonial heritage at the *Mémorial de l'Abolition de l'Esclavage* in Nantes and the *International Slavery Museum* in Liverpool, respectively. However, this remains a partial view which necessarily skates over the wider imperial context and the foundations it laid for racism and structural inequalities today. The leading role that maritime museums have played, at least in UK debates, remains understudied. The "cool Britannia" of the early 2000s brought with it an appetite to explore and challenge Britain's imperial history and legacy. For example, Bristol's British Commonwealth and Empire Museum was evidence of this trend, but its closure after just 6 years amidst scandal and its failure to find a new home in London suggest that appetite soon dulled. In today's tense political atmosphere resulting from terrorist atrocities, widespread hostility to immigration and refugees, Brexit, and the election of Donald Trump to the US presidency, it is instructive to study European museums' role in interpreting the lasting legacy of colonialism and raising awareness of its pervasive presence. For example, Phyllis Leffler (2004) showed how an exhibit on the transatlantic slave trade at the Maritime Museum in Greenwich attributed blame, deployed an emotive – even angry – register, created personal narratives (sometimes inventing characters where no testimony exists), and signaled the lasting effects of racial hierarchies today. Some of the strong visitor reactions to the exhibition criticized it for provoking a sense of shame and not giving visitors anything to feel proud or patriotic about. This highlights the tension embodied in the museum, caught between being a forum for difficult debate and a place to inculcate nationalist values.

As Abu Talib Ahmad (2014) carefully documents in the case of Malaysia, museums are a powerful means of shaping the national imaginary and the place of ethnic groups within it. Ahmad (2014, 4) explores the role of Malaysian museums "as custodians of heritage within a narrowly defined nationalist agenda, which favors the dominant Malays." He emphasizes the national museum's close correlation with school history textbooks, for example, but also signals the growing discontent with its "grand national narrative" that has even reached court. In neighboring Singapore, the death in 2015 of its "founding father" Lee Kuan Yew, who led the country from 1959 to 1990, was commemorated in a small memorial exhibition held at the National Museum of Singapore that same year. Chronicling his life as inextricably bound up with nation-building, it left the visitor in no doubt that according to official ideology, Singapore is a nation-state and not a city-state. For example, the section titled "Survival and Nationhood 1965–1990" detailed Lee Kuan Yew's activism across all areas of community-building, noting that he "and his Old Guard colleagues considered themselves to be public educators as much as political leaders." Singapore's National Heritage Board carries out a similar function. It is tasked with telling the "Singapore story" and conveying the "Singapore experience" through its network of museums, monuments, trails, and sites (http://www.nhb.gov.sg/about-us/overview), each of which contributes to Singapore's official nation-building ideology of unity in ethnic diversity. This is embodied in museums devoted to Singapore's Malay, Indian, and Peranakan cultures, for instance, and the extensive museum education programs that introduce school groups to multiculturalism from the age of five (http://nationalmuseum.sg/education-and-outreach/school-programmes).

Museums are particularly powerful purveyors of nationalist narratives because of their strong associations with authenticity and claims to truth. That is, they tend to be respected as repositories of scientific objectivity and reliability. Yet museums can also be sites of conflict, both local and transnational, as they seek to transcend past interpretations of their collections. In a recent, transnational look at how museums negotiate nationalism and cosmopolitanism, the noted sociologist Peggy Levitt analyzed museums across the globe in search of "new strategies that help instill the willingness and skills to engage with difference" (Levitt 2015, 5). Museum curators, influenced by the wider prevailing discourse, necessarily shape exhibitions through their attitudes, but only recently has this become more explicit, and have multiple perspectives begun to be incorporated into museum displays under the influence of "new museologies." Some of the museum sector, which the anthropologist James Clifford (1997) influentially likened to a "contact zone" between peoples, has responded to the growing expectation that it engage and consult with both local and source communities when staging exhibitions. Museums have a responsibility to be as inclusive as possible of the cultures they seek to represent (source communities) and those they seek to serve (local communities), but their expertise and authority in conservation and interpretation have been increasingly challenged by precisely those constituencies (Purkis 2013). In response, some museums have sought to provide a stage for "performances of identity" (Clifford 1997, 197) that question and reflect on supposedly stable identities, as opposed to upholding cultural memory and rootedness (Message 2006, 4-1). This clearly has implications for nation-building. Contrary to the view that migration museums transcend national borders and their limitations to illuminate hybrid, global cultures, for example, Joachim Baur (2009, 20) has shown that by examining "the often reluctant admission of strangers into a collectivity that defines itself as nation" (Welz, cited in Baur 2009, 17), migration museums can operate a multicultural "Re-Vision" (Baur 2009, 25) of the nation itself. The next section takes up the theme of migration and nation.

Nation and Migration

Migration holds up a mirror to national identity. For example, the irruption of refugees and migrants across European borders in summer 2015 and the press and public reaction to an ongoing but suddenly acute issue should be viewed through the lens of nations and nationalism. European governments frequently restrict migration and access to asylum on the basis that national culture and cohesion will otherwise be threatened. The issue of immigration is uppermost in the mind of many European voters and subject to sustained scrutiny, while the danger to cultural cohesion that immigration is said to represent goes largely unquestioned. According to Keith Taylor (1998, 950), "posing a regional identity does not erase or diminish the potency of national identity but rather mimetically reinforces it." In other words, Taylor is arguing that regional identity follows the same logic as national identity, writ large, and is thus subject to the same myth-making narrative of shared values, common characteristics, and historical continuity that nationalists attribute to the nation. Regionalism, used here to designate an ideological orientation, defines the European Union both in terms of what unites it and differentiates it from the non-European "Other." What the migrant crisis has done is to confront the European Union and its constitutive "Other" with such temporal urgency and spatial proximity that it can no longer look away. If we set aside for a moment the framing narratives of European and non-European, native and immigrant, refugee and economic migrant, and deserving and undeserving, the dominant terms of the debate disappear and the resulting blank is rather disorienting. Nationalist ideology enables the creation of a protected insider and a persecuted outsider, whether that be defined by Syrian grenades, Eritrean penury, or Hungarian water cannon. Increasingly too, national boundaries are being imposed on seas like the Andaman and the Mediterranean, where migrants and refugees whose human instinct is to escape their "home" state's persecution or economic underdevelopment are stymied by other states enforcing sovereignty as an exclusionary principle. According to this principle, marginality is the status in store for people seeking to improve their lives and livelihoods. To overcome this marginal status, these people would have to achieve the standards of citizenship set by the state (assuming they are admitted in the first place).

In order fully to "belong" in terms of nationality, properly understood, migrants and minorities at the margins of the state must assimilate the ethnic and cultural characteristics associated with the nation. In some instances, like Myanmar where legal citizenship is closed to the Muslim Rohingya minority, this simply cannot take place because Myanmar's national identity – such as it is – is closely associated with the Buddhist, Bamar dominant ethnic group. Myanmar's failure to build a multiethnic national identity is being laid bare by the move to a democratic system dominated by ethnic parties, the persecution of Rohingya on the ground that they have never "belonged" as state citizens, and continuous conflict over several decades. In the Andaman sea, for example, traffickers whose land routes have been disrupted retreat to a zone they consider to be outwith state control, leaving some migrants caught in the nightmarish limbo of "camps at sea." Conversely, in the South China Sea, we see Vietnam, China, and the Philippines attempting to establish their sovereignty claims through both historical exegesis and concrete structures. Indeed the South China Sea dispute exemplifies how sovereignty claims are being mapped onto the sea both literally (reef building, patrols, settlers) and figuratively, through competing research, historical interpretation, and truth claims. In both cases, the rules that regulate national belonging are set to work, and the politico-legal consequences of "Othering" are played out.

The category of migrant is created by the system of nation-state sovereignty that divides up the political world, just as ethnic categorization divides states internally into majorities and minorities. In turn, applying the notion of multiple identities to individuals suggests a finite set of identifiers that a person can inhabit, rather than taking a more dynamic and holistic view of people as engaged in a constant process of becoming (Appadurai 1990). Migrants blur the boundaries of the idealized national community that nation-states purport to represent (Sutherland 2014). They also collapse the distance between "us" and "them" and ensure the local and distant are closely intertwined. Yet migrants and minorities still tend to be cast as the "Essential Outsiders" (Chirot and Reid 1997) against which sovereign nation-states define their society and citizenry. This is encapsulated in the concept of nationality, in its strict sense of national belonging. It is in the categorizing and policing of minorities and migrants that the nation-state realizes its sovereign power as the representative of an exclusive political community.

Writing about the emergence of migration control in the late nineteenth century, Adam McKeown (2008, 12) observes that "the very construction of the 'free' migrants was the act of ripping them out of previous social networks and reinserting them into new matrices of bureaucratic power." This involved considering migrants as individuals, on the one hand, and standardizing their defining characteristics on the other, made possible by emerging technologies of photography, fingerprinting, and large-scale filing systems. It also, of course, presupposed the right of a sovereign nation-state to regulate who could cross its border and gain access to rights and benefits once inside. From there, as McKeown observes, it was but a small step from turning practical means of identification into a new form of identity, one whose latest, most sophisticated incarnation is the biometric passport. In the past, the bureaucratic imperative of upholding the existing international system, rather than "constitutional protections or the rule of law," was often uppermost (McKeown 2008, 17). It could be argued that little has changed. Comparison between nineteenth and twenty-first century borders reveals them to be similarly characterized by arbitrariness, resulting from a large number of converging interests (security, legal, diplomatic, bureaucratic) often applied haphazardly or intermittently by officials "on the ground" (McKeown 2008; Painter 2010). Nothing illustrates the arbitrariness of borders more starkly than the sight of human columns repulsed from one European border crossing flowing around the obstacle and on to another temporary crossing which may be open 1 day and closed the next, resulting in a shift in status from asylum seeker to criminal, or the setting up of so-called detention "hotpots" or makeshift shacks to "settle" asylum claims. Just as historians like Keith Taylor have sought to escape the "stranglehold" of nationalist historiography, the enduring impact of bounded states and their nationalist underpinnings should not exclude other possible understandings of political organization. As anthropologists well know (Clifford 1997; Horstmann and Wadley 2006), state and society do not necessarily coincide, and transnational flows need not be contextualized in relation to sovereign nation-states empowered to exclude the unwanted "Other." On the contrary, critical nationalism studies are better served by approaching space and time as uneven and heterogeneous, opening up potential for the "Other" to be conceived as "one of us" (Delanty 2009, 70).

Conclusion

The boundaries of belonging to a nation are subject to constant evolution and negotiation, not least as nations define themselves against the "Essential Outsider" (Chirot and Reid 1997). Indeed, far from being temporally stable and spatially and historically fixed, nations and nationalism could be better defined as an ongoing work in progress. The humanitarian needs of desperate migrants pose such a conundrum to nation-states because their own sovereignty and national sense of self are also at stake. Australia, for instance – a nation of immigrants if ever there was one – has adopted a policy of pushing back migrants because they embody the "Other" against which the imagined community defines itself. Spatial and social "Othering" is always relative, so we need to trace how the concept of nation necessarily draws lines between and among different social and ethnic categories against a historically, culturally, and politically dynamic backdrop. Distinguishing nationality from citizenship offers one important perspective on how migrants and minorities co-constitute the modern sovereign power. The history of modern nation-state building has been a process of pursuing the conflation of citizenship with nationality, or the creation of individuals who possess legal rights and duties as well as sharing in the imagined national community. A historical perspective on how various groups came to be excluded from this process of pursuing cultural and political confluence, and how the categories of “minority” and “migrant” were invented to accommodate these excluded groups, sheds light on ongoing inequalities and discrimination. There is also a class element to be considered, which can be racialized, as in the term ‘white working class’ (Shilliam 2018). As noted above, sociologists have problematized how media representations of local communities can be “scaled up” to be representative of the nation-state (Fortier 2007). The stereotypical idea of poor neighborhoods rife with criminality and dysfunctional families as representing “Broken Britain” is just one example (McKenzie 2015).

The interdisciplinary field of critical nationalism studies addresses and challenges the pervasiveness of ethnonational categorization in our thinking around community and nation. It remains to be seen whether migrant arrivals and refoulement will eventually reshape state-society relations. States face often conflicting demands to fulfil humanitarian and moral duties under international law, while maintaining the nation-state construct, that is, a construct premised on clearly defined and protected borders that keep citizens safe and unwanted “Others” out. This premise extends to nationality properly understood, namely, the sense of national belonging that underpins citizenship as a legal framework. Evolving citizenship regimes, such as Vietnam opening up to its diaspora, or India’s quasi-citizenship for Persons of Indian Origin, or the de facto availability of citizenship for sale in Cambodia and elsewhere, suggest that states’ territorial sovereignty over their citizenry may be increasingly difficult to square with nationality as an overarching and uniting sense of national belonging. Yet the numbers of votes cast for Brexit in Britain, Donald Trump in the USA, Marine Le Pen in France, Geert Wilders in the Netherlands, and Viktor Orban in Hungary suggest that many still want the certainty of national homogeneity encapsulated in a bounded “imagined community” (Anderson 1991).

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