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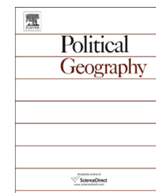

Dancing on the graves: Independence, hot/banal nationalism and the mobilization of memory

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ABSTRACT

Nationalism is frequently considered as an extreme, 'hot' phenomenon related to often violent nation/state-building processes. Billig's *Banal Nationalism* turned the attention to how nationalism is also 'flagged' and routinely reproduced in existing states. This article studies the mobilization of these forms of nationalism and suggests that *independence* is a useful notion in bridging the hot/banal divide and for tracing the 'hot in the banal'. Whereas for separatist movements independence is primarily a goal aspired to, in existing states independence/sovereignty is used to bring together hot and banal forms of nationalism which are mobilized in reproducing the discourses/practices related to the purported national identity. This paper first outlines a heuristic framework for conceptualizing independence and its key dimensions in relation to hot and banal nationalism as well as state-territory building. Secondly, the paper will study empirically the merit of the notion of independence regarding nationalism research via four themes: (1) the role of independence in Finland's state/nation-building process, spatial socialization and in mixing hot and banal nationalism; (2) the use of the 'independence card' by (nationalist) parties; (3) the mobilization of nationalist practices/discourses in the performativity of Finnish Independence Day; and (4) the resistance that the independence celebrations have incited. This study shows that the idea of independence in this context is inward-looking, draws on Othering, and is flagged in media and spatial socialization (e.g. education) using particular iconographies, landscapes, events, and memories related above all to wars. Rather than expressing hot *or* banal nationalism these discourses/practices effectively merge the two, challenging any simple dichotomy between them. The performativity of Independence Day in particular displays this blending.

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Introduction

It is a dark winter evening in Finland, the 6th of December. At 6 p.m. countless citizens light two candles in their windows – a traditional Finnish symbol for national independence. It is a national holiday and television has been broadcasting patriotic programming since the morning: a Lutheran service, military music and a parade, documentaries and movies related to historical events, wars and ordinary life. Now, over two million spectators, almost half of the nation, have gathered around televisions to watch an event that occurs in a festive Empire style house, the Presidential Residence in Helsinki. Suddenly a military band starts playing Jean Sibelius' Jaegar March and an almost endless queue of people quietly files into the hall. Over the next few hours men dressed in festive tailcoats, women in colorful evening dresses, move slowly and silently through the decorated hall. Each person stops for a moment to wish the Presidential couple a happy Independence Day, thus contributing to "the world's longest hand-shaking TV program" (cf. Kivioja, 2012). Later reporters interview guests, who praise Finland's independence. Earlier the same day, volunteers have arranged an outdoor 'Independence Day Gala' for the poor and homeless, distributing free meals. During the evening party, protestors demonstrate outside of the Presidential Residence, resisting riot police. They demand equal rights for the poor, and oppose the elites' partying and the power of capital in the EU. For major populist political parties, EU membership in 1995 practically signified the end of Finland's existence as an independent state.

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International law recognizes political independence as a condition where a sovereign state exercises territorial integrity over its bounded territory. Due to this fact, independence is often understood as inward-looking, territorial and set. However, as the dozens of independence movements around the world demonstrate, nation-statehood is not an unchanging given but evolves both inside and across existing territorial borders. Palestine and Kurdistan provide perhaps the most enduring examples but several political movements around Europe make – at times peacefully, at times violently – claims for independence (e.g. the Basque Country, 'Padania', Corsica, Veneto, Wales). In Scotland and Catalonia referendums on independence were organized in 2014. In the former, 44.7 percent of voters said yes, in the latter 80 percent (though the voter turnout in Catalonia was only 35 percent). In the UK, the political elite monitored the referendum with anxiety (Sharp, Cumbers, Painter, & Wood, 2014); in Spain the government declared the ballot illegal (unconstitutional), so the issue was effectively little more than an opinion survey. The idea of independence has also gained political significance in exclusionist political programs and even in the names of right wing parties that resist the EU and rely on anti-immigrant rhetoric and imagery (e.g. UK, Greece, Finland).

However, independence is much more than the legal aspects related to sovereignty, as the generalized vignette on the Finnish Independence Gala described above shows. It is also a social process and set of practices/discourses that bring together an actual (or aspired) sovereignty, the history of a territory, as well as a selection of routinized habits, events, memories and also narratives and iconographies related to the purported national identity. Independence thus also encompasses national symbols, meanings, collective memory and the everyday. It is a contestable and complex, emotionally laden idea/ideal that can be mobilized in contradictory ways.

The above examples allude to the fact that the nation is usually seen as a 'natural' unit and independence as its apex. The notion of independence is therefore closely related to nationalism. Michael Billig's (1995) work has been particularly inspiring for reflecting on the multiple dimensions of nationalism and he also provides some preliminary ideas on the link between nationalism and independence. He argues that much of nationalism research has focused on extraordinary or 'hot' nationalism, the often violent struggle toward autonomy, unity and independence, and that researchers have tended to ignore how nationalism is maintained once independence has been achieved. He coined the term *banal nationalism* to illustrate the reproduction of nationalism in existing states, and noted how national identities become "a form of life which is daily lived in a world of nation-states" (p. 68).

Independence is typically celebrated ('Independence Day') in states that have ceased to be part of another entity as a result of empires or colonial dependence collapsing or military occupation ending. Since the 19th century many 'successful' nationalisms have effected the disintegration of existing states, that is, independence has emerged from separation or liberation nationalism (Taylor, 1993, pp. 204–205). Respectively, independence-related national days are common in the Americas, Africa, Asia and Eastern/Central Europe. Conversely, many old European core states celebrate national days that are associated with events or persons rather than independence. Some states like the UK do not have a formal national/independence day, though there have been recent proposals to initiate a British National Day. While independence and national days may provide temporary fuel for banal nationalism, Billig (1995) accentuates the greater importance of routinized 'flagging', in weather reports, sports journalism or in the words of politicians ('we'/'us') for example, which continually reminds citizens of their nationhood.

Billig's ideas have raised much discussion and political geographers, among others, have challenged the strict distinction between hot and banal nationalism. Jones and Merriman (2009), for example, studied the campaign in favor of bilingual road signs in Wales and proposed the notion of 'everyday nationalism' which sees banal and hot elements as merged rather than separate. Benwell (2014, cf. Benwell and Dodds, 2011), for his part, argued that scholars should look at more blatant expressions and contexts of nationalism, such as education in school classrooms. His observations from Argentina and the Falkland Islands showed that expressions of nationalism in education were far from banal: young people were deliberately inculcated with narratives essential to national identity.

This paper contributes to the ongoing debate on hot/banal nationalism by adjusting the focus onto the notion of independence. While Billig (1995) noted in passing that independence is important not only for hot nationalist struggles but also for banal nationalism, he did not develop this idea further but took independence largely for granted. This article argues that independence is a useful notion for understanding the interplay between hot and banal as well as for tracing the 'hot in the banal'. My argument is that independence is – particularly in existing sovereign states – a crucial ideological medium that combines these nationalism forms (in politics, culture and media) in routinized and latent but also at times in very salient ways. Independence brings together material processes (e.g. construction and naturalization of national and military landscapes, symbols and maps) and events (e.g. independence/national days, flag days, commemorations of national 'heroes') that fuse various spatial and historical scales. It is thus a pivotal aspect of 'national meta-narratives' that define the key elements of the purported national identity (Morrissey, 2014) and conditions the subjectification and consent of citizens as reproducers of such narratives. Independence is hence a useful meta-level concept to expose the complexity and dynamism of nationalism and the institutional settings and events where nationalism occurs. From this angle, banal nationalism is not only something related to the daily flagging of the nation, and hot nationalism not just something extraordinary that predates this cooler stage. Rather, when entangled together – in certain national(ist) actions related to the everyday, memories, and ideologies and material landscapes related to war, loss and suffering, for example – these nationalisms become fused in such way that hot nationalism may be the critical catalyst for banal nationalism (cf. Benwell & Dodds, 2011). This confluence is mediated by institutions such as media and education but also by temporary but recurring performances in which the (meta-)theme of independence plays no small part.

Political historians and IR scholars have long seen independence as an important concept (Armitage, 2004; Dumbauld, 1976; Fromkin, 1981; Linklater, 1998; Schulze, 1994; Woolf, 1996). Political geographers have paid less – especially theoretical – attention to this notion and instead have theorized concepts such as sovereignty, state/nation, territory, border, national identity, and war (Agnew, 2009; Herb & Kaplan, 1999; Knight, 1982; Mellor, 1989; Murphy, 2013; Shaudys, 1962). Though absent from the key conceptual debates, independence has nevertheless inspired some political geographers since World War II, especially in the context of post-colonialism, border studies and sovereignty transfer (Kasperson & Minghi, 1970; Shaudys, 1962; Spykman, 1942). Political independence/sovereignty is inherent, for instance, in Hartshorne's (1950) famous 'state idea' and his 'centripetal forces' that strive to maintain the coherence of a state. Recently, geographers have noted the role of independence/sovereignty when studying state-building processes (Jeffrey, 2006; Kuus, 2002; Mercer, Mohan, & Power, 2003), the power of cartography (Berg & Oras, 2000; Culcasi, 2006; Jones, 2009; Zeigler, 2002), national

symbols/iconographies (Brunn, 2000; Hammett, 2014; Penrose, 2011; Raento & Brunn, 2005, 2008), and the rituals/spectacles related to national celebrations (Kong & Yeoh, 1997; cf. Benwell & Dodds, 2011).

Research design

In attempting to bridge the debates between hot and banal nationalism and their relation to the concept of independence, this article has two major aims. The first is to outline a theoretical–methodological framework for conceptualizing the key dimensions of independence in the context of nationalism. Instead of conceptualizing it as a mere territorial condition of international law, independence is understood here as a wider relational meta-level category (Fig. 1). This approach stresses both the contextual–territorial and wider geopolitical–relational dimensions of nation/state-building, pays attention to nationalism in spatial socialization, and – in methodological terms – suggests that the relationship between hot and banal nationalism should not be defined *ad hoc* or *ex ante*. Instead, it is crucial to scrutinize how nationalism operates in context (Benwell & Dodds, 2011; Billig, 1995; Jones & Merriman, 2009). Since independence is a medium that both stimulates and expresses hot and banal forms of nationalism, the second major aim of this article is to examine the relationship between independence and nationalism via one concrete case, the Finnish state. I will follow what Sayer (1992) calls an *intensive approach*. Respectively, this study is a context-sensitive and synthetic geo-historical analysis of the key processes, mechanisms, relations, activities, episodes and events related to production and reproduction of nationalism in the context of Finnish independence. It is based on diverse materials including interdisciplinary research literature, participant observation and photos, school geography textbooks, media texts (newspapers, magazines), internet comments and political platforms.

The case study comprises four sections. The first considers Finland's geohistory, nation/nationalism-building and independence achievement. Finland is an exciting case due to its geopolitical position under the Swedish and Russian regimes for 700 years and subsequent separation (1917), episodes that have perpetually fed national identity narratives. Further, its relationship with neighboring Russia has been eternally complex in terms of geopolitics. Recently, it has been argued that the modern transnational world of mobile people, capital, ideas and ideologies has brought the notion of fixed national identities into question (Agnew, 2009; Baird, 2014; Skey, 2009). Yet, as we saw above, in the EU many nationalist parties perceive the Union and immigration as threats to identity/independence. The second section therefore examines the contested ways how Finnish parties and political elites mobilize independence in their rhetoric. The third section closely examines the performing of the Finnish Independence Day festivities and the utilization of particular narratives, events, monuments and nationalized landscapes to celebrate certain past struggles and political memories (cf. Baird, 2014; Kong & Yeoh, 1997). The section will trace how hot and banal elements are used to signify and legitimize independence in national 'flagging', which – through media in particular – literally enters everyday life and enmeshes ordinary people as participants in hegemonic, homogenizing national narratives. Similarly to how the 'loss of independence' in the EU has motivated the rhetoric and resistance of nationalistic parties, the fourth section examines the street protests the Independence Day festivities have triggered. These two forms of protests thus challenge the received notion of 'Finnish independence' but from very different angles. Finally, some conclusions will follow.

A relational perspective on independence and spatial socialization

Political independence is often regarded as a 'substance', a state of affairs or a condition that a nation(al territory) has achieved or should attain. Continual mobilization of national narratives, symbols and nationalist practices is critical since – as Foltz (1963, p. 121) reminds – winning independence is only "the first and perhaps easiest step in building a nation" and "the new state apparatus must be solidly implanted and extended, and the loyalty of the people to a stable governing regime, not to an agitational opposition movement, must be assured." For Fromkin (1981, p. 15) political independence is an aspect of freedom that is negative, that is, "an entity is not ruled by anybody else" and "there is no entity above it, no political superior, no authority it recognizes and obeys." Woolf (1996, p. 1) identifies political independence as a key element that underlies the ideal of the nation-state together with the nation as a collective identity and the territory as an area with a border demarcating the necessary coincidence between nation and state (cf. Knight, 1982).

Previous views on independence are inwards-looking and emphasize the connection between sovereignty, collective identity and state territory. Such views have been challenged. As Murphy (2012) suggests, political geographers have moved from "treating territories as a priori givens to focusing on how political-territorial structures, practices, and relationships come into being, what political-territorial arrangements mean or represent, and how they function in relation to other geographical processes and patterns." States have never exercised either total political or economic-regulatory monopolies over their territory; globalization and mobility have further complicated the multifaceted relations between nationalities, territories and sovereignty that are embedded in wider inter-state arrangements (Agnew, 2009; Berg & Kuusk, 2010; Murphy, 2013). This has encouraged new research on how we should recognize territories, territoriality and borders in the current mobile transnational circumstances (Elden, 2009; Murphy, 2013; Paasi, 2012; Sassen, 2013). Territory involves the dimensions of authority (the state as an instrument of political, legal, police and

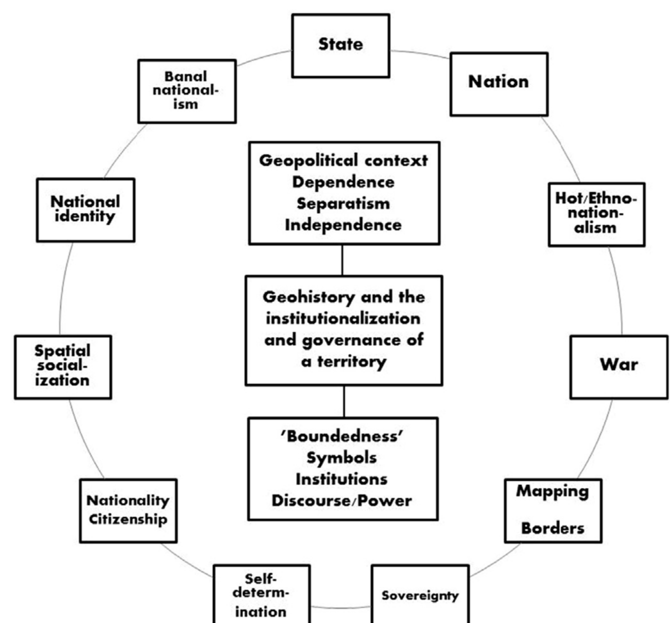

Fig. 1. The key dimensions of independence in the wider matrix of territorial institutionalization and geopolitical/geohistorical processes.

military control over population) and administrative, bureaucratic, or economic efficiency in the management of social mechanisms, as well as identity (Hassner, 1997). The notion of independence provides a useful meta-level category for understanding the 'allure of territory' (Murphy, 2013) and for problematizing the nationalist ideal that "there can be no nation without borders; the former follows from the latter" (Agnew, 2009, p. 67), an ideal that displays how nationalism is a deeply territorial ideology.

Hence, rather than seeing independence as a fixed territorial condition of an existing state, a relational perspective helps in understanding its versatile roles vis-à-vis political action, context and historical change. It is useful to conceptualize state territory as a geohistorical *process* that becomes institutionalized – often displaying separation from a wider territory – and may eventually lead to recognition, sovereignty, and independence (Paasi, 1996; Fig. 1). Independence thus typically reflects the wider geopolitical/economic relations, contradictory political motives, ideas/ideals and mobilizations of a territory. Recognizing wider geohistories, networks and interactions are critical in order to avoid falling on a 'territorial trap' (Agnew, 1994). Territorial and relational elements are hence inseparable constituents in the making of a territory and in generating imagined national(ist) spaces. Relational processes may 'stretch' the formal territory beyond its ostensibly stable borders and indeed be constitutive of such flexible borders (cf. Sassen, 2013). Borders are thus not merely lines located at the edges of territories but – as part of the symbolic and technological landscapes of social control (Paasi, 2012) – borders can be situated functionally, symbolically and ideologically in a variety of locations, networks, even outside of the state territory (e.g. 'national' military cemeteries located abroad, internationalized border guard systems) and yet nonetheless be crucial in making state territory/independence meaningful.

Fig. 1 heuristically brings together some categories and processes that are vital in the making and representing of independent territories. It also suggests that hot and banal nationalism are meaningful socio-spatial categories only within a wider matrix of concepts/discourses and social practices. Mapping and the production of territorial knowledge are key processes in the production of territories and in making them meaningful (Häkli, 2001; Kaplan & Herb, 2011; Murphy, 2013; Paasi, 1996; Zeigler, 2002). Nationality and citizenship, for their part, are crucial mediating formal and emotional categories that bring together the state, territory, forms of nationalism and independence (cf. Smith, 1979; Miller, 1995). The state ultimately decides how citizenship can be acquired and lost.

As regards internalizing collective identities and 'national' political subjectivities, people are not passive marionettes. Such internalization and national consent draw on interactions, practices and struggles in daily life where wider social institutions are faced, produced/reproduced and contested (Jones & Merriman, 2009). While multiculturalism and transnationalism are increasingly significant in education – often with the aim of educating neoliberal citizen-subjects capable of surviving in the global economy (Mitchell, 2003) – it is important to note that nationalism remains a prominent aspect of education and textbooks (cf. Benwell, 2014; Herb, 2004; Paasi, 1999a; Schleicher, 1993). Hence nationalism is embedded in *spatial socialization*, the process through which actors become members of territorial entities and internalize narratives and memories related to collective identities and shared traditions (Paasi, 1996, p. 8). Spatial socialization modifies citizens' subjectivities and consent, often obscuring power relations within 'us' and multiple forms of oppression and privilege (Benwell, 2014; Billig, 1995; Paasi, 1999a; Zhao, 2014).

Socializing institutions function in the field of symbolic economy, i.e. in the exchange of symbolic goods and gifts (Bourdieu, 1998). Such exchange refers to a specific deference, a social relation that converts power relations into moral ones (Paasi, 1996). People identify themselves with collective institutions only if they feel that they also benefit from symbolic exchange. Such benefits may include ontological security or sense of communal belonging but also more material elements (e.g. social and economic security). As Rosenau (1997, p. 220) has stated, "to the extent that people have a need for a community and a sense of independence, then to that extent the achievement and maintenance of sovereignty for their nation [serves] important human longings." It is clear that symbolic exchange is related to symbolic violence, the use of soft and invisible forms of power. The key medium for such exchange is language. Bourdieu (1999) in particular has stressed the instrumental power of words to produce things, to create collective fancies, fears, phobias or simply distorted images. Writing and talking about identities, or performing historical events through which identities are understood, literally brings them into being. Through language and performance representations thus become constituents of identity.

The institutionalization of Finnish territory, independence and nationalism

Finland is a fitting example of separation nationalism (cf. Taylor, 1993). Actually a set of provinces, the land was under the fealty of Sweden for 600 years before becoming an autonomous, 'internally independent' territory within the Russian Empire, with a senate, school system, economy, currency and stamps, for example. The autonomous state was created in 1809, but economic integration, cultural–political awakening and the creation of the mechanisms of spatial socialization occurred only after the mid-19th century. Finland attained political independence in 1917. The consolidation of the state and nationalism was linked with the rise of industrial capitalism, which the state promoted through infrastructure investments (e.g. canals, railways). This contributed to economic integration, mobility of labor and more effective communication (Moisio & Paasi, 2013). During the 19th and early 20th century, Finnish nationalism gradually developed from cultural and linguistic forms toward (contested) claims for full political independence, a process that was supported by the already existing territorial shape of the state (Häkli, 1999; Paasi, 1990, 1996). The gradual construction of borders, national iconographies and institutions as well as achieving and maintaining independence therefore display a complex geo-history linked to a wider geopolitical environment.

Schulze (1994, p. 110) observes that small nations often discover their 'national identity' in the struggle for their independence. In such struggles the mobilization of memory is crucial. As a small state with only 5.4 million inhabitants today, the narratives of Finland's national identity have, for the last 100 hundred years or so, been based on certain formative events and collective memories. These have been maintained by various social institutions through elements that draw on material culture, folklore, stereotypes and the images of an ostensibly 'Finnish national landscape' dominated by nature (Jokela & Linkola, 2013; Paasi, 2008). Media and routine symbols and language are crucial in the making of national identities (Schlesinger, 1991).

If language was crucial to Bourdieu, also Billig (1995, p. 61) accentuates the role of language in flagging national identity: one should not ask "What is national identity?" but rather "What does it mean to claim to have a national identity?" One way to answer such a question is to consider whose and what kinds of plots characterize the narratives through which independence and the purported national identity is told. Intellectuals are crucial in shaping both hegemonic national memories and forms of amnesia, and the

resulting identity narratives vary considerably. Finnish cultural historians regularly highlight cultural institutions (the Kalevala epic, Finnish language and literature, folk/classical music and art) (Reitala, 1983) and key national cultural–political actors (Wuorinen, 1935), while political historians stress political actors and processes, periods of crisis and how the state has overcome them (Jussila, Hentilä, & Nevakivi, 2009). The success of Finnish athletes in early Olympic games was presented as evidence of the vitality of the new state: Finland was literally ‘run on the map’ (Tervo, 2003). This sport-related national narrative is still crucial.

Despite such competing, inevitably biased partial narratives, geopolitical action persistently focuses on defining territories and their boundaries at various scales, and contestation over these is critical in the signification of social world and order (Harle & Moisio, 2000). War and secessionist activism classically serve as mediums for such contests and as catalysts for independence movements (Blacksell, 2006). Nationalism and war are thus closely linked (Conversi, 2008) and national security is one of the ideological-material cornerstones of state independence (cf. Kuus, 2002). Military infrastructures and conscript armies in particular have been crucial since they distribute state power and ideologies throughout the national territory and create consent (cf. Koch, 2011). Conscription is a key mechanism of spatial socialization in Finland as well, and the army is perennially a respected institution. About 70 percent of male cohorts perform military service. The ideological–visual aesthetic of the military effectively fuses hot and banal elements of nationalism. A fitting example is swearing the military oath, a festive family event where hot (memories of/preparation for war) and banal forms of nationalism (symbolism, flagging) come together (Fig. 2). The rhetoric of the mandatory military oath also reveals the link between war, sacrifice and religion (Paasi, 1999b).

Fig. 2. Combining hot and banal nationalism into a family affair: the military oath at a Finnish military base (photo by the author).

It is often suggested that the Winter War with the Soviet Union (1939–1940) had a profound impact on the Finnish geo-historical consciousness, bringing into identity and independence narratives a very ‘hot’ element that tends to homogenize the store of national, collective experiences (Paasi, 1996). Harle and Moisio (2000) note that Finland's national identity politics has complex roots embedded in the relations between Sweden, Finland and Russia, but also that national independence in 1917 and the fixing of state borders gave a new meaning to such politics by bringing the land and national territory together.

Violence, wars, and the threat represented by Russia/the Soviet Union have in general been critical in shaping national narratives related to independence. Similarly, the politico-ideological border with Russia has been at the core of the narration of national identity since 1917 and even earlier. The Finnish state as a national ‘We’ has typically been constructed in exclusive terms in relation to Russia/the Soviet Union (‘The Other’). The memories of World War II are formative. While Finland preserved its independence, after the war it had to cede 10 percent of its territory to the Soviet Union and resettle over 400,000 evacuees. The ceded Karelian area became highly important for national narratives, heritage and collective memories (Paasi, 1996), and a sore object of emotional ‘territorial phantom pains’ for the evacuees (cf. Billé, 2014).

After World War II the political elites struggled to find a balance between the geopolitical west and east, especially as Finland was required to sign treaties that tied it to the Soviet sphere of interest, thus shaping the geopolitical context. In some Anglophone geopolitical maps Finland was simply represented as part of Eastern Europe (Cohen, 1964, p. 63). Due to the Soviet influence, independence became a *relative* concept in Finland (Meinander, 2003).

Independence narratives, whether representing hot or banal nationalism, often enter everyday life in the form of small things. During the early independence period a candle and a miniature Finnish flag were delivered to the people living in the border regions to remind them of their national identity. Also, the economic development of border areas was seen as crucial for maintaining independence (Paasi, 1996). The prosaic omnipresence of national bank notes, coins and stamps has been important in nation-building (and resistance) already since the 19th century (Raento & Brunn, 2005; Raento, Hämäläinen, Ikonen, & Mikkonen, 2004). Also Independence Day anniversaries have had their own commemorative stamps, depicting scenes from the national Kalevala epic, the wars with the Soviet Union, national heroes, and national landscapes (Raento & Brunn, 2005).

Spatial socialization and independence

Many symbols and narratives related to national identity and independence have become manifested in spatial socialization. In Finland, state-centric spatial socialization extends back to the mid-19th century, to the cultural–political work of nationalist activists who outlined the stereotypic features of the ideal Finn, the fatherland and the Other. Patriotic literature was an essential part of the national curriculum, promoting an image of a uniquely Finnish identity (Salonen, 1970; Wuorinen, 1935). History and geography as subjects were also mobilized in schools to serve the nation-building process. Geography textbooks introduced to children the Finnish state, its borders, stereotypes of its citizens, and sometimes racist representations of other nations. School atlases prepared in the era of autonomy represented the state as a bounded territory after the mid-19th century, i.e. before independence, provoking criticism from the Russian authorities (Paasi, 1996). Until the 1960s, the state was typically labeled in textbooks as the

'fatherland' while the allegorical 'Maiden of Finland' provided a female representation for independence that was reproduced in art but also in more prosaic ways in advertising, for instance.

School geography occupied a powerful position after Finland gained independence. The 30 Finnish geography textbooks considered here display this clearly. They demonstrate that children were socialized into a rather exclusive national mindset until the 1980s. The text and landscape photographs both contributed to the reproduction of nationalism (Jokela & Linkola, 2013; Paasi, 1999a). The following excerpts from school books show the prevailing organistic thinking, normative patriotic narratives of independence, the rhetorical fusion of spatial scales from the human body to the nation, the purported linguistic homogeneousness of the actually bilingual nation, and an ostensible one-to-one relation between the citizen and state:

> "All people live in societies. Every home is a small society…. A state is a larger society. We all belong to the Finnish state" (Jotuni, 1928, p. 14)
>
> "Finland is a living whole, a state individual…. The region surrounded by a border passing over the ground is owned by the Finnish nation…. The Republic of Finland is thus, as far as its structure and function are concerned, a gigantic uniform organism, just as a human being is a uniform organism" (Auer & Poijärvi, 1937, p. 12)
>
> "Finland differs from other countries. Our fatherland is Finland. We are the Finns and we all together form the Finnish nation. We speak Finnish. The Finnish nation owns Finland. Nation and country together form the Finnish republic or the State" (Auer & Merikoski, 1942, p. 21)
>
> "Our fatherland Finland is an *independent state*. The place that distinguishes Finland from other states is called the *border*" (Hellaakoski, Tuominen, & Mattila, 1954, p. 7, emphasis original)
>
> "We, Finland's citizens together, have all the power in this country. We constitute the Finnish state together with our country. Finland is a republic." (Myrsky & Ulvinen, 1960, p. 114)

Finland's borders were labeled as 'sacred' in many textbooks, referring to the home, religion and fatherland axis and implying that Finland was a 'chosen nation' in the religious sense. Religions and gods have often been recruited in the service of nationalism (Billig, 1995). During World War II, newspapers actively reproduced such ideas (Paasi, 1996, pp. 194–195) and during the Continuation War (1941–44) even military priests were committed to nationalistic ideas of a holy war against Bolshevism (Tilli, 2014). After the war the content of the books was 'neutralized', again reflecting the changing geopolitics. Nevertheless the memories of war and sacrifice were entrenched in school practices: a number of high schools have on their walls honorary lists of students that died in World War II, serving not only as daily reminders of the dire national past but also effectively melding 'hot' and 'banal' (Fig. 3).

After entering the EU in 1995 textbooks began to accentuate Finland's membership in a wider 'Nordic' and European space. Similarly, international immigration and refugees became a topic in the books. The national space gradually opened.

The contested geopolitics of 'independence' in the transnational world

Narratives on national identity and geopolitical order are co-constitutive. While political identities and spaces are often contested and characterized by various forms of resistance (Pile & Keith, 1997), the performances of nationalism typically entail the narration of an unambiguous geopolitical order that mirrors the desired role of the nation-state (Benwell & Dodds, 2011; Dittmer, 2013; Dodds, 2000).

Fig. 3. A memorial in the Joensuu High School (now an Art Museum) showing the names of 130 former students who died during World War II. The text tells how "peace will bless the work and sacrifices of generations" (photo by the author).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the political elite began to 'reposition' the Finnish state on the geopolitical West–East axis. Finland's EU application and membership in 1995 raised a debate on independence in the new geopolitical context, which political parties interpreted in dissimilar ways (Paloheimo, 2000). The 'Westernizers' supported membership as a means to increase *de facto* independence, i.e. to reduce Russia's potential to interfere in Finnish politics (known as 'Finlandization') which had prevented 'unquestionable recognition' by the Western states during the Cold War period (Moisio, 2006, 2008). Before membership, opponents argued that Finland would lose its independence if the state entered the EU, a prediction given by, for example, the Euro-critical factions of the Christian Party, Central Party, and the Left Alliance (Paloheimo, 2000). Later, for many critics the change from the Finnish currency *markka* to the Euro became a symbol of independence lost (Raento et al., 2004).

Independence has become an even more mythical issue now that the bulk of (trans-)national legislation comes from Brussels. Particularly the populist political groups have questioned the dominant, unproblematic view of Finnish independence, even denying the possibility of political independence within the EU. EU-skepticism often arises from an exclusive nationalistic perspective. In Nordic countries the 'threat to national culture' has been among the key motives of far right parties, whereas in many other European states motives are often related to anti-immigrant attitudes, Islamophobia or economic recession (The Economist, 2012). Some fringe Finnish political groups, such as the Independence Party, emphasize the value of national 'self-reliance' and advocate the abolition of the Euro currency. The Independence Party has no real political power, but *The Finns*, by contrast, have 38 members out of Finland's total 200 MPs. The Finns is a conservative, Christian social and EU-skeptical party that emphasizes the importance of independence and claims that humankind is 'naturally' divided into different cultures. Consequently, they are vigorous supporters of independent national states and Finnish culture: "only a nation that constitutes a nationhood that is separate from other nations, has an eternal and unlimited right to decide freely and independently of all own matters" (Perussuomalaiset, 2014). Nationalist thinking often associates citizenship with independence so that immigration is seen as a threat to independence. Hence the virtually transparent bedfellows of these ideas are anti-immigration

sentiments and, at times, openly racist comments by some MPs, though the party formally rejects racism.

Billig (1995, pp. 101–103) speaks of a 'patriotic card' whose players – e.g. populist right-wingers – claim that only their politics have the nation's interest at heart. More than other parties, The Finns have used the rhetorical 'independence card'; both independence and national self-determination are crucial in the party's agenda. Not surprisingly, this card was mobilized in the 2014 European Parliament elections as well. The party's EU election coordinator bluntly stated that: "In these elections we will vote, in effect no more or less than on the independence of Finland. Do we want to be an independent state or a part of a federal state, the carrier of the burden of other member states?" (Sinisalo, 2014). Independence was thus mobilized as a vehicle of national exclusion.

Some other parties also commented on independence in the context of the EU elections but did not see EU membership as a 'threat'. For the Central Party (2014), the EU was an "association of independent states." The key aim of The National Coalition Party (2014), for its part, was to "safeguard the independence of the state, to develop European cooperation and to strengthen Finland's influence and position in the world."

During the recent economic recession, nationalist, anti-immigration attitudes have gained support in elections in Finland and other European states. The EU elections in 2014 witnessed the victory of EU-critical and anti-immigrant parties, and in the UK and France the EU-critical parties became the largest parties. In Finland the winner was the National Coalition Party and The Finns were not able to repeat the success of previous parliamentary elections, yet they received 13 percent of the vote. Since the municipal elections of 2008, The Finns' immigration critique has been echoed by some other parties, which has led to the strengthening of the idea of a more exclusive national identity (Koivulaakso, Brunila, & Andersson, 2012). And yet, the amount of Finnish citizens born abroad is only 5.2%.

The performativity of Independence Day in Finland

> Again, during this Independence Day, at 6 pm, The Finlandia Hymn of Jean Sibelius echoes from millions of radios and televisions. Though spectacularly mundane, it still articulates the words to those stifled feelings that were recorded into the memory of our nation during the years of war and during the decades of restoration that followed them. May the hymn bring clemency, consolation and light in the minds of all of us… (Angeria, 2012)

Independence and national days are typically emotionally laden 'summaries' and performances of claimed national identity, symbolisms and material practices. Political elites play the key roles in conducting the rites, but the real significance of such events with respect to reproducing nationalism is related to the practices and discourses through which 'independence' is brought into daily lives and made meaningful. The media are in a key position in such mediation, thus disclosing another major agent of national socialization besides education.

Various context-bound signifiers related to independence affect its banal manifestation in daily life (cf. Benwell & Dodds, 2011; Coles, 2002; Henry & Berg, 2006; Jones & Merriman, 2009). Making independence meaningful is a process of performativity, that is, "the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names"; it is a "regulated process of repetition" (Butler, 1993, p. 2). Such reiteration reveals itself in concrete flagging but also in daily and annual rhythms (e.g. national holidays), in the utilization of national iconographies and in the rhetoric of festive speeches given by various actors. Finland has seven annual flag days when state offices and institutions are required to fly the flag. Independence Day is one of the official flag days and as the national holiday it provides the background for other events. There are also 13 days when flagging is recommended by the state. Eight flag days are related to Finnish culture and to the historical key figures or 'identity-makers' in the realms of literature, music and poetry. The Finnish Defense Forces, veterans and the war dead, too, have their own flag days, often accompanied by patriotic national-wide programs. Official linguistic minorities have their own unique flag days, too.

Waving the national flag is not an everyday thing in Finland but any Finn can raise the flag on special occasions (e.g. birthdays or other family events). Official flag days provide the nation with a sort of annual nationalistic cyclical rhythm that perpetually reproduces political memories related to various hot and banal nationalist events and episodes that animate the idea of independence. This cyclical rhythm is entangled with a linear timeline (cf. Dittmer, 2013) that witnesses the 'aging' of the state and gives a further booster to anniversaries, which are often symbolized by special stamps (probably next in 2017 when the state will celebrate 100 years of independence). Both rhythms are embedded in the wider geopolitical background.

The previous sections confirm Billig's (1995) argument that to create narratives of national identity is to possess ways of talking about nationhood. Yet much of national discourse is simultaneously embedded in material political landscapes (national buildings, cemeteries, monuments) (Johnson, 1995; Morrissey, 2014) and in practices, events and rituals, such as military processions and other parades. The latter reproduce memories and identity/independence narratives by re-enacting landscapes or 'deathscapes' (cf. Maddrell & Sidaway, 2010; Fig. 4). In such performances hot nationalism effectively merges with banal and institutes a culture of memorializing that serves to preserve and forge collective memory.

Geography comes into play in the sense that the winter season sets limits to the forms of celebrations, so in Finland Independence Day (6th December) is thus primarily a media event that draws people around televisions and patriotic programs related to 'home, religion and fatherland'. These include the Lutheran Independence Day service and a military parade in some Finnish cities, as well as films and documentaries related to attaining independence and maintaining it after the Winter War (1939–1940) and the Continuation War (1941–1944). Additionally, local patriotic events which bring together the military, memories of war and religion are organized around the state (Fig. 4). New war-related monuments are unremittingly being established (Tuomisto, 1990), which increases 'symbolic thickness' and crafts a war-related moral landscape that is starkly discernible in the national space and everyday life. Such widely spread topographies illustrate well that borders are not mere abstract lines between two states or codes on maps, but that symbolic bordering is distributed throughout and, at times, beyond territory (Paasi, 2012).

Dancing on the graves: Independence Day in the Finnish media

'Dancing on the graves' in the title of this article comes from a column written by the pseudonym Siltavahti ('Bridge guard') (Siltavahti, 2010) who noted that the celebration of Finnish Independence Day occurs mostly through memories related to war. This not only blends hot into banal flagging, but also provides a largely military-masculine character in contrast to the female allegories of the nation such as the Maiden of Finland used as the symbol of independence and the 'purity' of the nation (Paasi, 1996; Reitala, 1983; cf. Koch, 2011).

Fig. 4. Veterans and the members of voluntary defense force organizations waiting for the Independence Day speech by the army chaplain in a military cemetery in Oulu city (photo by the author).

In the past the 'nationalist novel', with its plot enacted in a recognized shared space, together with the newspaper, were the key vehicles for the emergence of an imagined national community (Anderson, 1991). Today such media also include television and the internet, and are more complex in both representing and performing nationalist events. Televisions spread to Finnish households in the late 1950s. In order to see the changes in the performance of Independence Day on television, an analysis was made of the TV broadcasts transmitted on these days in 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2010. Three themes were noted. The first observation is hardly surprising: (1) many programs are patriotic and related to national history. However, the second and the third show that hot nationalism is deeply embedded in banal nationalist performance: (2) War and the military are crucial in presenting the national past and their role has increased; (3) the quantity of patriotic programming has dramatically increased during this period. In 1960, 1970 and 1980 3–4 hours of patriotic programming was broadcast, in 1990 nine hours, in 2000 twelve, and in 2010 no less than 13.5 hours. In 2010, TV channels broadcast more than 12 hours of war-related programming: documentaries on the battles between Finland and the Soviet Union, military music, parades and the classic Finnish war movie *the Unknown Soldier*. This film, based on the best-selling novel by Väinö Linna, has been shown on TV annually since 2000 and before that intermittently. It tells a detailed, emotional story of the fates of individual soldiers and of the group dynamics of a machine-gun company during the Continuation War. This movie has strengthened the imaginaries of national identity for decades and created mythical figures for the national gallery of regional mentalities (Paasi, 1996).

An important feature of national memory is its selectiveness (Schlesinger, 1991). Henry and Berg (2006, p. 630) speak of the dialectic of 'remembering and forgetting'. The Finnish Civil War between white and red forces that followed the declaration of independence in 1917 is not part of the dominant identity narrative performed on television on Independence Day. Rather, *the Unknown Soldier* film is used to narrate how World War II united the nation across the former class-based political dividing lines.

Hetero-normalizing the nation on TV: the body, food and dance

> "The celebration of Finland's independence has moved from memorializing the wars to a merry-making that unifies the nation. The party in the Presidential Residence has an important role in this…. The party symbolizes the essence of independence…. Even if the nation celebrates in the Residence via its representatives, people in almost every home participate in the fest by watching it on television." (Kaleva, 6.12.2012)

The Independence Day Gala is the most watched program on Finnish television. The Gala started already in 1919 and the first television broadcast was in 1957. Notably, in 1970 the Independence Day broadcast did not include the Gala but instead featured Soviet cartoons and a Russian language course, perhaps reflecting the Zeitgeist (i.e. *Finlandization*). Since 1983 the program has been broadcasted annually. Weeks before the event, the tabloid press and magazines start to speculate on each year's invitees, who are later interviewed and deliver comments on the importance of independence (Fig. 5). The press reports on the party for several days and, later, the weekly magazines continue the same storyline. And the following year, the whole ordeal is repeated again, showing the power of the 'reiterative practice' by which discourse on independence produces the 'effects that it names'. The party is the most important event of the year for the commercial media: "The afternoon papers have the peak of the year in their selling numbers, a number of magazines come out earlier to come in for a share of the spoils, and even the traditional daily newspapers reserve a lot of space to introduce the costume shine of the party" (Kivioja, 2012). Varis (2012) argues that along with this commercialization the nationalist role of the Gala has changed from a rather official, gray and ceremonial event to a largely visual media-based carnivalesque. In practice, mourning the sacrifices of the wars and a carefree party are fused.

The plot of the event is simple: the almost 2000 invitees shake hands with the Presidential couple and then trail into the hall, and it is quite a trick that this event can be conjured into a media spectacle that unfailingly attracts a major audience. This must be due to the symbolic meanings and collective memories related to this spectacle, which provide people with a sense of sharing in the national fates, struggles and narratives related to independence. Television commentators report the event in a lively but respectable way. The guests mostly include the political (local politicians, MPs, ministers) and military elite, representatives from business life, religion, media, culture (high culture, sport heroes) and university circles. War veterans figure prominently among the guests. The numerous ordinary citizens that the President has invited bring to the party an element of the everyday that viewers can share,

Fig. 5. Selling Independence Day in the Finnish afternoon press (photo by the author).

envy and identify with. International component arises from the presence of foreign diplomats who thus participate in reproducing independence. Major elements of the ritual are the interviews where the invitees volubly express their sentiments on the meaning of independence, not least war veterans who add a touch of 'hot memories'. However, not everybody likes the current cheery format of the Gala: "the key aim of the party cannot be who has bought the biggest breasts or the longest eyelashes … the key emphasis is on the wrong issues. Veterans are lying in hospital beds and they should be remembered." For others the carnival is fine: "Lately there has been some debate on the superficiality of the party but I think that it is respectful towards independence to wear one's best clothes and to highlight Finnish designers" (Ilta-Sanomat, 7.12.2011).

The power of the party emerges from the predictable order of things that become a naturalized part of national flagging as well as of the media narrative. Landscape, food and body are well-known banal constituents of a nation (Palmer, 1998). Soon after the welcome ceremony the 'nation' starts to enjoy traditional Finnish cuisine and drinks. This is followed by dancing initiated by the Presidential couple, a ritual established in 1925. The crowd squeezes into the hall under the lights needed for TV broadcasting, providing nourishment for the old plot that the venue is both hot and cramped. Yet there is plenty of space elsewhere in the residence and even more when the online broadcast is over and many guests instantly vanish (Author's participant observation).

Social space is always a product of social relations. Dancing, bodily movement can be seen as a gendered social text and as such also supporting or threatening the existing socio-spatial order and moral conventions (Cresswell, 2006; Pine & Kuhlke, 2014). The dancing nation is assumed as being 'naturally' hetero-masculine (Henry & Berg, 2006). Former President Tarja Halonen's determination to promote social equity (Tiilikainen, 2010, p. 6) included the invitation of gay people to the party. While there have long been gays among Finnish MPs, ministers and candidates in presidential elections, one particular episode of the Party challenged the given hetero-masculine norm. The dancing gay couples resisted the norms of the hetero-masculine national social space and stirred frantic debates in the media in which dancing – a particular performance of the nation (Nash, 2000) – was regarded as appropriate only for hetero couples. This episode was bitter particularly for some MPs of the nationalistic The Finns Party. The representatives of the Seta (LGBT Rights in Finland) organization commented that Finland had moved on to a new era and should be ready to accept difference (Ranta, 2010).

Glocal protest: the gatecrashers

The nationalist parties', especially The Finns' protest discussed above focused on the potential 'loss of independence' in the face of socio-political and cultural 'threats' in the EU (e.g. the loss of legislative power to the EU, immigration), that is, independence was a rhetorical device for claiming more strictly bounded national(ist) spaces. The second example of protests related to independence is an *ad hoc* series of 'glocal' demonstrations organized by activists that oppose globalization, the state/the market, and who see the EU as a medium of the colonizing effects of globalization. Beginning in the mid-1990s, public protests were organized by heterogeneous groups of radical activists and anarchists, 'Gatecrashers'. They opposed the Independence Day festivities as a manifestation of the exclusiveness of elitist, political independence.

Several Gatecrashers' protests have occurred since 1996 and often their march ended at the Presidential Residence during the televised party and thus gained considerable media attention. Their key claims included, for example, a more equal income distribution, better housing possibilities, and a citizens' Europe instead of a neoliberal Europe (cf. Hoikkala, 2004). The Gatecrashers' further aim was to organize a "borderless revolt against the borderless elite" (H.S., 2006), to give voice to unemployed and marginalized people, and to secure a basic income level and basic services for all citizens. In 1999 the event was inspired by the anti-capitalist precedents from Seattle, where activists protested the WTO's neoliberal politics on globalization. Although the Gatecrashers were not an organized social movement, their aims were broadly similar to those of the later 'Occupy' movement that, as Sassen (2013) argues, represents elementary steps toward making new distinct territories, transversally bordered spaces not bounded by existing state territories.

Most Gatecrasher protests were non-violent but there were also occasional attacks against police. The most intense demonstration was organized in the city of Tampere (2013), where the Gala was exceptionally organized because of ongoing restoration of the Presidential Residence. During the party, protesters struggled with police outside the venue and broke shop windows; dozens were arrested. Whether this was an instance of 'hot internationalism' or not, it undoubtedly brought a different sort of 'hot' element into the ordinary flagging of independence. The violent protest raised an intensive debate in the local newspaper's (*Aamulehti*) online section, which reveals not only how new media is mediating the discourse on independence but also how emotionally laden the festive routines of Independence Day are. An overwhelming majority of the almost 200 comments opposed the violence and some characterized the event as the actions of a 'drunken mob' that insulted the 'traditional order' of independence festivities. The comments reveal how the banal understanding of 'national identity' is embedded within powerful ideological structures which reproduce the given hegemonic relations of inequity that the young activists challenged (cf. Billig, 1995).

> Sick; they should show at least a bit of respect for Finland's independence and especially the war veterans. (6.12.2013 19:48)
> For shame!!! Every veteran, member of the women's auxiliary defense services, and representative of charity organizations has a right, once a year, to be recognized for their work on behalf of our independence and society. (6.12.2013 18:19)
> For sure the elites must be resisted, but why should this be done during Independence Day, which is our, everybody's own Day. There are 364 other days in a year when you can do it. And did this drunken gang expect that they can get people on their side? (6.12.2013 13:46)

Some commentators sympathized with the protesters and criticized poverty, the ongoing cutting of services, the uneven distribution of wealth in Finland or nationalism, but many also blamed EU membership for the 'disappearance of national independence'.

> I fully understand these protesters; the elite is there, eating and debauching … at tax payers' expense. This gang partying there has not done shit on behalf of the independence of Finland, on the contrary they have given the rest of it to the EU. It is grotesque that the Finnish flag is still waving on the flagpoles, and the Coalition Party in the forefront has created a class society. (7.12.2013 20:07)
> The situation in Finland is unbearable. It is time to rise to the barricades. This was one reason to start. Hopefully, starting from now, people will also riot for 'right things', like against unemployment, poverty and the rundown of services. (7.12.2013 06:22)

Conclusions

Regardless of the optimism associated with the end of the Cold War and the rise of the increasingly relational, transnational world, it is fair to say that nationalism, exclusion and conflicts continue to characterize the contemporary world. Many ethno-nationalist and religious movements, whether by peaceful and/or violent means, struggle toward the goal of an independent state, while the already independent states eagerly and unendingly remind their citizens of past conflicts and sacrifices when reproducing the purported national identities in discourses, material practices and landscapes. Territory's allure (Murphy, 2013) persists even in the transnational world.

The hot features related to nation-building processes have formed the core of nationalism research. Michael Billig's (1995) idea of banal nationalism redirected research toward the domains where (and how) nationalism is actually 'flagged' and where it operates silently after unity and independence have been achieved. He called for systematic research on the 'taxonomies of flagging' and on the different genres of banal nationalism, their rhetorical strategies, and the extent of flagging in various domains and nations. Political geographers later challenged the hot/banal divide and invited scholars to study the contexts of everyday life to reveal how actually existing nationalism manifests itself (Benwell & Dodds, 2011; Jones & Merriman, 2009).

This article has taken seriously both Billig's proposal and the criticism of it offered by political geographers. Its key purpose has been to problematize the hot/banal divide through the prism of independence, a notion which Billig tends to link with hot rather than banal nationalism and one which he does not theorize. The idea of independence and its emotional, nationalist power have been under-theorized also in political geography. This study shows that it is a critical meta-level category that comprises not only various forms of nationalism but also the geohistorical, structural—contextual, and narrative elements embedded in the production and reproduction of bounded state territories. Independence provides a contested terrain where 'the evil' (nationalism) is often garbed in the form of a 'lesser evil' (patriotism and national identity).

The case study on the production and reproduction of Finnish independence demonstrates that once accomplished, (political) independence is not merely a fixed state of affairs but a dynamic, contextual, and contestable process that positions the state as part of the ceaselessly shifting geopolitical landscape and can take on innumerable local and national, and even contradictory forms in material landscapes, practices and narratives. This flexible abstraction is mobilized by the state, political parties, educational systems, media, NGOs, and organized and *ad hoc* civil society movements in their own ways, for their own purposes. This complexity inevitably takes us beyond the hot and banal nationalism divide toward scrutinizing contextually the key sites, material practices and discourses in which nationalism is produced and reproduced. Both structural geohistorical and banal forms of nationalism must be interrogated through each other. Hot elements (of nationalism) do not lie buried in history, lurking innocently in the background behind banal nationalism, but are embedded within it, thus injecting a critical emotional fuel into banal nationalism. The inseparability of the 'structural' and the 'everyday' not only forces us to problematize the various forms of nationalism but also to recognize the historical contingency of territories and borders. Despite that independence-related nationalisms tend to regard them as literally carved in border stones, both territory and border are ultimately merely temporary processes and manifestations of social relations in the unending chain of socio-spatial transformation. This fundamental tension is vividly evident in many European and non-European states and will certainly provide a highly exciting conceptual and empirical terrain for political geographic research.

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