

# Relaunching

## *Studies on National Movements*

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In the aftermath of an important basketball game, the legendary basketball player Michael Jordan reportedly told the young and future star player Shaquille O'Neal (who had been on the losing side in this particular game) that 'to learn to succeed, you must first learn to fail'. At first glance, the use of a basketball analogy to frame a journal on nationalism studies might seem farfetched, and yet Jordan's quote succinctly encapsulates *Studies on National Movements'* recent history.

A hack of the journal's website had resulted in the postponement of any future volumes, effectively bringing the journal's output to a grinding halt. This constituted a difficult period for the journal, and it has taken longer than anticipated to get the journal back on track, partly because of a necessary overhaul of the digital infrastructure, which is now based on the Open Journal Systems (OJS) platform.

However, this gloomy time – during which one could hardly be excused if they would designate the journal a fail – also unveils the other side of the coin: it has provided *Studies on National Movements* with the possibility to reflect on its role in the field of nationalism studies. In particular – to briefly return to the basketball analogy – *Studies on National Movements* has two skills that constitute it a particular player on the court, and which we want to emphasise and focus on following the relaunch of the journal.



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The first is that *Studies on National Movements* focuses on the intermediary structures that play a crucial role in the study of nationalism and national movements. The journal gives institutes, archives and research centres the opportunity to disseminate their collections, research projects or specific archival sources to researchers of national movements. This emphasis on the intermediary structures grants *Studies on National Movements* a unique position in the field, as it allows for discussion and debate across a large network of different institutes, centres, and subsequently, researchers.

This extensive network is the second element that we want to stress. *Studies on National Movements*, in its connection to NISE, functions as a bridge between the researcher and the institutes that house collections on specific national movements, and makes it possible to connect different actors from different regions. In addition, *Studies on National Movements* is the perfect vehicle to convey the different research outputs to the members of the NISE-network, and keep them informed about activities that have been conducted during the last years.

The next two volumes are intended to recuperate some of the activities that have been taking place during the last couple of years. This volume in particular draws its contributions from the conference in Prague in 2016, titled 'Protagonists of national movements'. That conference took its cue from Miroslav Hroch's remark that the notion of *Vorkämpfer* or 'protagonists', so saliently foregrounded in his comparative work on national movements, had not in itself given rise to sustained reflection and theorization. Who, indeed, are these *Vorkämpfer*? Do they belong to the elite, to the popular masses, and what is their power to mobilize their movements?

The problem is, indeed, a centrally relevant crux in nationalism studies and it is hoped that the present volume of reflections will stimulate the research community towards a more probing analysis. While many *Vorkämpfer* worked in an environment of urban sociability and might be classed as lower-middle-class to middle-class artisans, entrepreneurs or

professionals, the social spectrum they span is in fact wider. Among the protagonists of national movements, certainly in Phase A and early Phase B, we encounter serfs (Taras Shevchenko), royals (Ludwig I of Bavaria, Carmen Sylva), and anything in between: clergyman (rural and urban), house tutors, librarians and professors; diplomats, merchants, shopkeepers, entrepreneurs, landowners and small farmers. A first task is to map this diverse cohort, which in itself exemplifies the class-transcending unity of nationality (and for that reason perhaps enjoyed such cultural and political prestige). Obviously the threadbare polarity between "elite" and "populace" is insufficient to account for their role as, precisely, protagonists: people who inspired, set agendas, spread ideas. Their power base is traced perhaps less through the socio-economic environment that they operated in than through the networks they engaged with, and against the growth of cultural leisure-time entertainment and sociability as a burgeoning field for mass-consumption or mass-participation. Their agency may have as much to do with their influence on institutions as with their mobilizing appeal for the population-at-large. The present volume offers a few initial ventures into this exciting new field in nationalism studies.

In addition to this volume, the next volume will also be comprised of contributions from activities that had been organised by NISE in the last couple of years. This way, we want to convey to the reader that while *Studies on National Movements* was on a forced hiatus, NISE itself has continued to grow and progress. By relaunching the journal, we hope that *Studies on National Movements* will become an intrinsic part to NISE and its network. To return to the basketball analogy one last time: it is time for *Studies on National Movements* to come off the bench again, and become a star player for the team.