'Homelands and Hostlands: The Spatial Dynamics of Political Mobilisation in the Early-Twentieth Century World'.

Introduction: The Importance of Space for Understanding Political Mobilisation

This special issue considers the categories of 'homeland' and 'hostland' as a means to approach questions of identity, loyalty and estrangement that both inspired and shaped political mobilisation in the early-twentieth century world. The decade prior to the First World War and the wartime era can be considered as a transitional juncture, spreading across historians' periodizations. These years represent the final frame of the long-nineteenth century and the closure of the belle époque, the era ending with the outbreak of the First World War, or the watershed year of 1917, which saw the Russian Revolution, the American entry into the war and the fading fortunes of the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, they represent the first chapter of the twentieth century, when nationalist and imperialist tensions sharpened and produced a new era of violent conflict. On the one hand, the early-twentieth century was a time in which modern territoriality, which Charles S. Maier refers to as the organization of a 'space with a border that allows effective control of public and political life', reached its apogee, as seen in rising nationalism and state centralization.[1] On the other hand, these were years characterised by movement across these same borders: mass migration, colonial expansionism, missionary movements, and, in the other direction, imperial fragmentation and regionalism.[2]

The advance of the global went hand in hand with a renaissance of the particular. Within this context of both high mobility and increasing localism, the articles in this special issue ask how individuals and communities, who formed parts of marginalised and minority groups, voiced grievances and engaged in collective action to challenge the political centre or influence official decision-making. What were the factors that mobilised individuals and groups alike, and how did grassroots actions relate to developments on the local, regional, national and transnational levels? How might we understand the spaces that different actors – be they diaspora groups, political exiles, religious or regional communities – operated in to address grievances, offset marginalisation, protect identities, and assert loyalties?

The articles in this issue look at the role of space in structuring, enabling and legitimating political mobilisation in Europe and among European diaspora groups during the first two decades of the twentieth century. The concepts 'homeland' and 'hostland' aim to offer a useful interpretative framework here. What do we mean by these categories? In the most familiar sense, homeland and hostland refer to territory, more specifically to the places of origin and, in the case of diaspora groups, of settlement. How did the experience of living in-between countries and cultures, whether physically or figuratively, shape politicisation and collective action? Yet, homeland and hostland could also serve as imaginary spaces, or mental maps, on which to project hopes and visions for either socio-political change, religious emancipation, and national unity. More generally, in an age of at once high mobility and closed communities, what purpose did the juxtaposition of homeland and hostland serve for politicisation?

Ideas of homeland and hostland are distinguished by the experience of geographic and cultural distance. Whilst they can be used to examine actors and ideas that move across defined borders (Maier's territoriality), they could also be employed to articulate particularistic identities within established nation-states. Homeland and hostland are not considered here as fixed categories, but as frameworks to understand political mobilisations that are produced in spaces where boundaries are porous, identities open to negotiation, and loyalties ready to be challenged. These concepts could exist in the plural, such as when references to a homeland could at once point at a concrete geographical space (say, a nation-state), and at a political, social or religious community. Depending on the political rationale and intent, they could be ascribed different meanings. Homeland and hostland could operate as complimentary concepts, as in the case of migrants, who had voluntarily left their countries of origin to build new lives elsewhere. Yet, they could also play out against each other, such as when particularistic groups within the nation-state rebelled against the political centre or, alternatively, tried to connect their ideas to those advocated by the hegemonic group. As hybrid concepts, homeland and hostland offered a framework for political mobilisation that could appeal to different audiences and serve different purposes. Analysing how different actors perceived and used these spatial frameworks for the purposes of mobilisation can illuminate new aspects of collective action.[3]

Recent years have witnessed the growing prominence in historical studies of transnational approaches that seek to de-centre the nation-state and shift the emphasis toward analysing 'movements and forces that have cut across national boundaries', as Akira Iriye put it in his classic definition.[4] There is much to be praised in these efforts to highlight the 'networks, processes, beliefs, and institutions' that exist beyond and move between nation-states.[5] They can reveal the historical mobility of individuals and groups alike, whilst also demonstrating the existence of a distinct space of human interaction that is shaped and inspired by cross-border movements.[6] At the same time, transnational history is not free from certain pitfalls.[7] One prominent critique has suggested that it can become a 'means of avoiding the realities of nationalism and of national power'.[8] Presenting the modern world as one interconnected place can lead to underestimating the historical importance of the nation-state for the organization of political life and social processes. The articles in this issue put the nation-state back into the analysis, but also shift and alternate the scale of analysis to the transnational and global levels, as well as to intra-national, regional and local levels. The nation-state here functions as a foil for projecting and negotiating alternative visions of organizing political space and for understanding contentious politics among groups moving beyond it (diaspora groups and exiles) and within it (minorities). Paradoxically, the early-twentieth century was characterised by growing ideas of national uniqueness and a strengthening of borders, whilst also being years of rising internationalism among, for example, labour movements and humanitarian organisations, and heightened particularism among regional or religious minorities.

This was an era in which new forms of mass politics gained in importance. Although ballot box reforms had already partly opened up mainstream party politics to men in the middle and lower classes, communities frustrated by marginalization, repression or the erosion of rights demanded more change and at a greater pace. Cross-border movements such as anarchism, syndicalism and – in a completely different way – Catholicism pressed for new opportunities for political participation, just as particular groups such as migrants or regionalists did. The forms of political mobilisation considered here were shaped by increased contact and intellectual transfer. They often emerged in swift response to external events and circumstances, such as contentious laws, the outbreak of war or large-scale strikes, yet also tapped into a long-standing

reservoir of distinctiveness at best, and alienation at worst. The repertoire of activism analysed here ranges from the 'soft' politics of newspaper pamphleteering, fundraising and petitioning for humanitarian causes and political prisoners, to more explicit forms of protest such as demonstrations, strikes, blockades and brawls. It comprises campaigns by both advocates of radical social transformation and by more conservative groups that aimed to resist change. It includes mobilisations in urban and rural settings, protests in countries with or without universal (male) suffrage, attempts to either challenge or celebrate the nation-state, and actions involving men and women.

As the articles in this special issue show, homeland and hostland were constitutive categories for political mobilisation. Inversely, mobilisation efforts contributed to new experiences of identity and loyalty and hence changed the fabric of the very same spaces that had given rise to them. The course of these trajectories – and hence the impact of political mobilisation – was uneven. The highly mobile Irish syndicalists in South Africa were moved to action on the eve of the First World War by the socio-economic distress in the host society and their strong sense of connection to the international Anglophone syndicalist movement, even if they were perceived as outsiders whose Irishness factored in their radicalism. Opposition to Italy's military expeditions in Northern-Africa among expatriate anarchists increased their sense of exile, whilst these same feelings of being forced abroad encouraged them to seek a return to the homeland to exploit new revolutionary circumstances. Although German-Americans never contemplated a similar return 'home', the outbreak of the First World War did help reconsolidate the diaspora community, whilst simultaneously prompting rising tensions with the hostland over a perceived lack of loyalty. Loyalty was also a key-word for the Catholic protectors in Brittany, France, who in response to the separation of Church and State (1905) adopted a broad repertoire of violent and non-violent actions to contest the French state, while suggesting their primary loyalty was variously to the local community, the region or the supranational Catholic Church. A similar trade-off between national and religious identity was experienced by Catholics in the German Empire, who, after facing political anticlericalism during the 1870s, had by 1914 become vocal supporters not just of the German war effort but of the territorial expansion that brought greater regionalism to the German homeland.

Taken together and individually, the articles collected here demonstrate the importance of real and imagined space for inspiring, structuring and legitimating political activity and ideas in the early-twentieth century world. They also show that homeland and hostland – and their various derivatives such as fatherland, *patria*, *Heimat* etc. – were important categories for politicisation exactly because they were relational and open to interpretation, which made them appealing to different audiences. The articles also show that notions of space sometimes helped overcome otherwise divisive factors such as class, religion, gender and generation. Mobilisation may have occurred in response to pressures and circumstances external to the community, but the agency of individual historical actors greatly mattered and is a central aspect of each study.

Attachment to local culture formed an important motivation behind the collective action that Catholics launched against the French Law on the Separation of the Churches and the State of 1905. Opponents of the law variously described it as an attempt at 'spoliation' or 'dechristianisation'. When, one year later, officials undertook the gargantuan task of auditing all Church property (a prerequisite of the Separation Law) they encountered hostility across France. Analysing crowd action in Brittany, Eveline G. Bouwers shows how the intersection of religious, political and national differences prompted feelings of alienation among a significant part of the region's overwhelmingly Catholic and rural population. Here the concept of homeland had changing registers and 'can be applied to different social spaces that each potentially challenged loyalty to the French state. These include the local commune, Brittany and the international community of Catholic believers'. Resistance to the Separation Law took the form of symbolic and sometimes violent actions by men and women, who were keen to defend the local community against external influence, uphold regional particularism and preserve Church influence.

Feelings of connection to a distant *patria* or motherland factored in the protests of emigrant Italian anarchists against Italy's 1911 colonial invasion of Libya. The connection to the homeland was complex here, since anarchists felt no loyalty to the Italian nation-state and ideologically were internationalists, committed to global revolution. "The whole world is our motherland", claimed the song by the anarchist

poet Pietro Gori, yet the same song also suggested that expatriate anarchists were exiles, who would one day return to Italy. For many Italian anarchists, imperialism and injustice in their homeland was their primary concern and provoked the most combative protests. By tracing how opposition to militarism and the repression of the 'Red Week' was coordinated among anarchists in Italy and the far-flung Italian diaspora, Pietro Di Paola argues that '"exile" and "motherland" related to one another, and the influences exerted by exiles over the domestic movement in terms of organisation, contacts with groups of other nationalities, and the enrichment of theoretical thought and militant practices', are key to understanding Italian anarchism. This transnational mobilisation was facilitated by the circuitry of newspapers, pamphlets and people that linked anarchists in multiple locations.

Ethnic bonds and emotional affinities for the homeland inspired German Americans' relief efforts after the outbreak of the First World War, generating tensions in an environment of increasing American hostility toward the German Empire. Prior to 1914, German American leaders had been concerned about ethnic fade in the largest diaspora group in the United States. Yet, Elisabeth Piller demonstrates how humanitarian initiatives for the families of German soldiers and prisoners of war during the period of American neutrality 1914-1917 generated a new, heightened ethnic consciousness amongst a previously fractured group. These humanitarian initiatives were part of a much broader upsurge in trans-Atlantic humanitarianism during the war, yet because of the German Empire's status as a belligerent, they gained a particular political edge. In fact, although in principle an apolitical and respectable endeavour, relief work became increasingly politicised in the context of anti-German wartime sentiment, forcing German Americans into a 'difficult negotiation process between political loyalty to the "hostland" and cultural loyalty (*Treue*) to the "homeland"'. When the United States joined the Allied war effort, the distinctions that German American relief organisations had sought to make between ethnic solidarity and actual political support for the German Empire became difficult to sustain, and they rallied to the war effort of their adopted homeland.

Alongside Germans and Italians, Irish migrants constituted one of the largest European diaspora groups in the early-twentieth century. The massive Irish movement to Britain and North America fuelled a powerful diaspora nationalist movement that

has received extensive scholarly study. Turning our attention to South Africa, John Cunningham provides us with a more unfamiliar perspective on Irish radicalism, which shows that not all Irish migrants subscribed to a similar sense of longing for their native country, but very much engaged with their (temporarily) adopted country. Mary Fitzgerald and Tom Glynn were two syndicalist agitators who became active in the South African labour movement in the years before the First World War. Cunningham demonstrates that even though they were part of an Irish Catholic minority in South Africa and the stereotype of the 'Irish rebel' contributed to their reputations as agitators, there 'was not much that was obviously "Irish" about the politics espoused by either'. Instead, they operated in a broader British labour milieu and cooperated with Afrikaners, Africans and others, freely moving between different national and ethnic spaces. Instead of projecting their ideas back to the nation from which they hailed, they were explicitly outward-looking.

During the First World War, German Catholic understandings of the space and regional diversity of the homeland were shaped and adapted according to the changing circumstances of war. Rebecca Ayako Bennette brings to light the ways in which the influential Catholic journal *Germania* sought to mobilise its readership behind the *Reich*, aiming to offset questions about Catholic loyalty and subdue potential divisions within Catholic Germany, including within the Center Party. For this the journal drew on the rhetoric of the *Kulterkampf* of the 1870s to emphasise how Catholic regions were essential parts of the nation, insisting on the idea that diversity 'was quintessentially German'. In late-1915, this assertion of regionalism as enriching the German homeland began to incorporate newly occupied regions of the Baltics, extending the mental map of the German nation. *Germania* was accustomed to highlighting the Germanness of peripheral Catholic regions; drawing on familiar topoi, it tried to mobilise support for the idea that 'the Baltics were more than a temporary hostland that could potentially be bargained away to gain a favorable peace; instead they were part and parcel of the German homeland whose defense justified continued perseverance'. The newly-conquered regions in the East were thus presented as yet another piece in the national jigsaw.

All of the articles in this special issue consider the importance of spatial perspectives in understanding how people and communities are moved to action by grievances, frustrations and loyalties. Drawing on rich archival detail, each article considers different case studies that highlight diverse forms of politicisation and provide new insights into how communities negotiated questions of boundaries and space, and hence of homeland and hostland, in the early-twentieth century. They show that, in an era of high mobility and increasing localism, political mobilisation was intimately connected with questions of space, making both use of it yet also depending on it.

<p style="text-align:center">* * *</p>

Bibliography

Bayly, C. A. *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914*. Malden, MA: Wiley, 2004.

Bayly, C. A., Sven Beckert, Matthew Connelly, Isabel Hofmeyr, Wendy Kozol, and Patricia Seed. "AHR Conversation: On Transnational History." *American Historical Review* 111:5 (2006) 1440–1464.

Bloxham, Donald and Robert Gerwarth, eds.. *Political Violence in Twentieth Century Europe,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Conrad, Sebastian, "Circulation, "National Work", and Identity. Debates about the Mobility of Work in Germany and Japan, 1890–1914." In *Entangled Histories and Negotiated Universals*, edited by Wolf Lepenies, 260–280. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2003.

Iriye, Akira. "Transnational History [review article]." *Contemporary European History* 13 (2004) 211–222.

Haupt, Heinz-Gerhard. "Une nouvelle sensibilité: la perspective 'transnationale', une note critique", *Cahiers Jaurès* 200 (2011), 173-180.

Maier, Charles S. "Transformations of Territoriality, 1600–2000." In: Transnationale Geschichte: Themen, Tendenzen und Theorien, edited by Gunilla Budde G, Sebastian Conrad and Oliver Janz, 32–55. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006.

Martin, Deborah G., and Byron Miller, "Space and Contentious Politics", *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 8:2 (2003), 143-156.

McGerr, Michael. "The Price of the 'New Transnational History'" *American Historical Review* 96:4 (1991) 1056–1067.

Osterhammel, Jürgen. *Die Verwandlung der Welt: Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts,* Munich: C.H. Beck, 2009.

---

[1] Maier, "Transformations of Territoriality", 34.

[2] Hobsbawm, *Age of Empire*; Bloxham and Gerwarth, *Political Violence in Twentieth Century Europe*, 3-4.

[3] Martin and Miller, "Space and Contentious Politics", 145-7.

[4] Iriye, "Transnational History", 213.

[5] Beckert, "AHR Conversation", 1459.

[6] Conrad, "Circulation", 260; Bayly, "AHR Conversation", 1449.

[7] For a critique of the inflation of the concept 'transnationalism', see, for example, Jürgen Osterhammel's argument that it makes little sense to describe the religious networks of the nineteenth century as transnational, despite them spanning the world. Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung*, 1277. Heinz-Gerhard Haupt has cautioned about the tendency to describe border-crossings as something inherently positive. Haupt, 'Une nouvelle sensibilité', 177-8.

[8] McGerr, "The Price", 1066.