

**A system of locks or a tool for social change?  
Nationalism and inequality in comparative perspective**

In *Thought and Change* Ernest Gellner defined nationalism 'as a system of locks' maintaining differences of economic and cultural status among areas of the world. At the same time, he described it as a tool for social change 'born of the discontent of proletarians' and capable of 'generating enthusiasm, providing incentives and opportunities, and organising development in terms of local rather than extraneous needs and consideration'. Other authors have struggled to make sense of the Janus-faced nature of nationalism: on the one hand, erecting barriers between human populations; on the other, fostering solidarity among the members of the national community and promoting equality among national groups.

This panel intends to focus precisely on such ambivalence of modern nationalism by examining how political actors and social movements use, or can make use of, nationalism as a frame/strategy to either preserve or fight inequality—meant in a broad sense encompassing social, economic, political, and cultural/symbolic dimensions. We are especially interested in studies concerning the context of the recent economic crisis in Europe, but also open to wider historical and geographical experiences. These can include studies on minority nationalism and separatism, as well as debates relating to immigration—especially with reference to nativism and welfare chauvinism—and following a broad range of theoretical and empirical approaches. Relevant research questions may include, but need not be limited to, the following:

- Does nationalism naturally entail inequality?
- Does inequality foster nationalist contestation?
- Under what conditions, and in relation to whom, is nationalism a force contributing to increasing inequality? And, vice-versa, when does nationalism foster equality and for whom?
- Is there any correlation between inequality and nationalism in the context of the recent economic crisis?
- Can we think of national identities more conducive to both in-group and inter-group equality?

Scholars interested in taking part in the panel should send the title (20 words max) and abstract (500 words max) of their paper proposals to Emmanuel Dalle Mulle ([emmanuel.dallemulle@graduateinstitute.ch](mailto:emmanuel.dallemulle@graduateinstitute.ch)) and Eleanor Knott ([E.K.Knott@lse.ac.uk](mailto:E.K.Knott@lse.ac.uk)) by February 14. Please indicate the email address registered in your MyECPR account, as we need it for the final registration.

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