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## Editorial: Scales of Belonging

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Everyone belongs: it is impossible not to belong to social groups, social relations or cultures. However, some people belong to particular groups or places with more intensity than others, and there is often less choice than we might imagine as to whom and where we belong (or do not belong). Belonging is a dynamic emotional attachment that relates individuals to the material and social worlds that they inhabit and experience. It is about feeling 'at home' and 'secure', but it is equally about being recognised and understood (Ignatieff 1994). Processes of modernity and globalisation - and more specific articulations of these processes such as increased migration, individualisation and new forms of inequality and residential segregation – have both disrupted, and increased the desire for, 'locally-based' belonging (Amin 2002; Bauman 2000; Castells 1996). In this context, the notion of belonging raises fundamental concerns about the relationship between *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society) (Tönnies 1955). It also, as Yuval-Davis *et al* argue, demands a consideration of “the shifting meaning of identity, family, the influence of spatial (migration) and existential (material) displacement and, further, the actually confused (and diffused) longing for stable *emotional attachments* as they are articulated in national, ethnic, cultural and religious affiliations” (2006: 4, emphasis in the original).

In recent years there has been an increased interest (both within and beyond academia) in what belonging is and what it means to belong (or not-belong) (see, for example, the special issue on 'Geographies of Belonging' in *Environment and Planning A* (Mee and Wright (2009))). Most commonly this tends to occur in those spaces and spheres of life where familiar certainties are disrupted or challenged; where belonging is unsettled or perceived to be under threat. For example, in the UK, the (2005) 7/7 London bombings, increasing antisocial behaviour and the growing popularity of far right political parties is interpreted, in some quarters, as a failure of (multiethnic) belonging (Commission on Integration & Cohesion 2007a and 2007b). Yet responses by the UK and other states facing similar challenges frequently create more concerns about a lack or loss of belonging than they address. Belonging can be a useful resource for minimizing conflicts between people, but it can also be a crucial basis for intergroup tensions and exclusionary or discriminatory behaviour (cf. Calhoun 2007). Think, for example, how anti-terrorism laws in the UK and India have been critiqued for unfairly targeting religious (Muslim) minorities (Harindranath 2009; Poynting and Mason 2006), or how the majoritarian public sphere in France is being 'cleansed' of religious modes of dress (Fekete 2004; Keaton 2006). It seems that all too frequently attempts to tackle social problems caused by the lack of belonging experienced by some social groups does little more than entrench that same or other groups' sense of dislocation and exclusion.

Despite the centrality of belonging to human experience, the current literature on the subject is relatively limited in terms of its scope in three ways. First, the majority of work on belonging tends to focus on the relationships between ethnic, national and/or religious affiliation and belonging and plays down or ignores other forms of affiliation, based on, for example, gender, sexual orientation, age, or (dis)ability. Second, the current literature rarely accounts for the intersectionality of belonging (cf. Valentine 2007) and the ways in which individuals negotiate multilayered, contested or competing senses of belonging which may occur at a

range of different spatial scales. Third, and most importantly in the context of this themed special issue, even when belonging is the focus of a text rarely does the author engage with belonging as an *emotional affiliation*. Seldom are questions asked that explore what belonging feels like; how it 'works' as an emotional attachment and the significance of the emotionality of belonging. Belonging tends to have an assumed or taken-for-granted nature that is seldom explored (cf. Skrbiš 2008; Thien 2009; Westwood and Phizacklea 2000).

But perhaps this is symptomatic of the nature of belonging? As the following papers demonstrate belonging is, more often than not, tacitly experienced; we often know more about what it *feels like* to belong (or to yearn for belonging) than we can articulate. Belonging and 'longing to be' (...yourself, accepted, respected, included...) are powerful and emotive imperatives that inform the ways in which lives are lived and futures are made. They can shape politics, inspire caring communities and lead to social wellbeing; but, conversely, they can also create social divisions, encourage prejudice, and provoke violence. It is because of our belief that the power of belonging lies, somehow, in the emotional (and emotive) qualities of its attachments and affiliations that we think the emotional dimension of belonging demands further thought and investigation.

This special issue, which seeks, in part, to address this under-theorisation of belonging, began in a rather soulless hotel room in San Francisco at the 2007 annual meeting of the Association of American Geographers where Nichola Wood co-organised (with Gill Valentine) a double-session on 'Scales of Belonging'. Some of the authors contributing to this special issue presented their early work in this forum, and have since shared our sense that too little attention has been paid to the specifically emotional nature and experience of belonging. We therefore proposed to guest-edit the current special issue of *Emotion, Space and Society*. While what follows is by no means a comprehensive exploration of the emotional dimensions of belonging, we hope it represents the beginning of a more sustained and in-depth study of belonging; one which fleshes out the role, significance, nature and experience of belonging as an *emotional affiliation*. We begin from the position that belonging is not a natural occurrence; people do not simply or ontologically 'belong' to particular places or social groups (cf. Bell 1999). Rather, as Probyn (1996) highlights, belonging is an affective act (see also Fortier 1999). Belonging is not just be-ing, it is also a longing or yearning.

The collection of papers in this special issue all revolve around nuanced explorations of the emotional experiences of belonging that are accessed through the deployment of a scalar lens. A decade ago, Morley (2001) noted that belonging can be conceptualised at multiple scales, and of course authors interested in belonging have long focused on particular geographical scales from an individual's abode right up to a national homeland. But as recently as last year Antonsich made a plea for scholars to "look more carefully at the plurality of scales at which belonging is articulated" and to explore "the 'here' in all its multiple scales" (2010:653). It is to such a plea that the papers in this special issue are oriented, with an explicit focus on the emotional dimensions of belonging.

The papers by Caluya and Gorman-Murray both push forward this research agenda to explore the different scales from which belonging can emerge through an awareness of the politicisation of belonging. Caluya does this in terms of interrogating examples of what he calls 'scale-jumping' between the nation and the home. Through exploring two separate moments in Australia's history of racial politics of belonging, Caluya suggests these moments result in an effective erasing of the level of the neighbourhood and thus the possibility of a politics of community. Gorman-Murray also focuses on scalar dimensions of belonging by exploring how belonging is interconnected with wider structural changes and he elaborates his argument through a case study of how the global financial crisis has influenced spatio-emotional belonging among middle-class professional men. In focusing on men, Gorman-Murray further responds to our earlier suggestion that gender affiliations are often downplayed in research on belonging.

A central part of Gorman-Murray's analysis is spot-lighting the global/local binary within scalar explorations of belonging and the remaining authors in this collection similarly focus on the 'here and there' of migrants' belongings through both spatial and scalar analyses. Migrants are unsurprisingly often central characters in writings on belonging; this is because they frequently have multi-positioned relationships to different locales on account of their migratory journeys from a source to a destination area, the likely network of social, symbolic and material ties retained to their homelands, and the newer sets of social relations formed in host communities. The papers in this collection from Richter, Brown, Waite and Cook, and Christou, and are closely linked in their empirical focus on diasporic groups. These four papers seek to further our understanding of the emotional dimensions of belonging for such groups that frequently leaves 'home' as a multi-placed material and metaphorical space (Staeheli & Nagel, 2006).

Richter explores the spatial accounts of Spanish guest workers in Switzerland and probes places of identification and of daily action in order to accompany the workers on their emotional journey through place attachments. Alongside a similarly nuanced analysis of the meanings that are inscribed into places, the papers by Waite and Cook, Brown and Christou further highlight the importance of recognising *difference* among purported 'group' belongings. Brown vividly illuminates the differences between post-war and recent-accession Polish migrants in the UK; whilst Waite and Cook (African migrants in the UK) and Christou (Greek migrants in Denmark) reveal the sameness and differences of belongings that can be discerned within and across first and second generation diasporic groups. These investigations of differentiated and distanced belongings are continued in the contribution by Fields. 'Emotional Refuge' extends the body of work on psychological dimensions of belonging through an investigation of how formerly homeless people with mental illness define community. In doing so, Fields contests bounded ideas of community and neighbourhood through her suggestion that social and kin ties to previous neighbourhoods are of pivotal importance to emotional belongings invoked in the present.

As we stated above, this special issue is a beginning and not an end. The papers included tell us something about the relationships between the power of belonging and the emotional (and emotive)

qualities of its attachments and affiliations. However, we hope that this collection inspires debate and future study and that it furthers our quest to encourage more sustained scalar research around the emotionality of belonging.

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