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The Internal Other: Exploring the Dialectical Relationship between Regional Exclusion and the Construction of National Identity

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The Internal Other: Exploring the Dialectical Relationship between Regional Exclusion and the Construction of National Identity

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<AB>Societies have historically sought to spatialize difference—to other—even within the boundaries of supposedly unified polities. Drawing on previous scholarship on the spatialization of difference in published case studies, we examine the dialectical relationship between the formation and institutionalization of regions on the one hand, and the nation-building process more broadly on the other. Certain regions become repositories for undesirable national traits as part of a dialectical process of nation- and region-building. The processes of othering are rarely as linear and tidy as proposed in some current formulations of the theory; rather, othering involves a host of concomitant processes that work together to produce economically and culturally differentiated regions. The processes by which particular places or regions become “othered” are not only interesting in the abstract, but also carry with them enduring material consequences. To demonstrate this effect, we visit two historical case studies that examine the formation of internal others in 19th century Europe (Italy and Germany). *Key Words: regionalism; nationalism; othering; Italy; Germany*

Spatial approaches to national identity have long been at the heart of inquiry in political geography, and a growing body of literature in the field places the concomitant construction of regional and national identities firmly at the center of attention (e.g., Paasi 1991, 2002a, 2002b; Bialasiewicz 2002; Agnew 1997, 2001, 2007). Crucially, just as nation-states have often created

an external “other” in the pursuit of nationalist agendas, societies have often created an “othered” region within the borders of ostensibly unified polities in the pursuit of nation-building. We propose that this process of othering, which facilitates the creation and institutionalization of distinct regional identities (i.e., the U.S. South, or the *Mezzogiorno* in Italy), is in fact deeply involved in nation-building; yet the ways in which this happens and the consequences thereof are inadequately understood. Most scholars have dealt with the issue of “othering” in discrete national contexts, and there is much to be learned from these studies of a diverse range of places, including Israel (Yiftachel 1998), Sweden (Eriksson 2008), India and Pakistan (Chaturvedi 2002), and the United States (Jansson 2003b, 2007, 2010). The question we seek to address, however, is whether there is something to be learned by comparing regional constructions in different historical and geographical contexts. While we find that the empirical flesh of the studies listed above and many other scholars’ works on the institutionalization of regions (cf. Paasi 1996), provide a wealth of insights, there is little attempt to move beyond unique experiences in distinct temporal and spatial contexts to the formulation of a framework for understanding the parallelism of the regional “othering” experience across time and space.

In the following exploration of the relationship between regions and nation-building, we are particularly concerned with what Mac Laughlin calls “the fragmentary and conflict-ridden birth of state nationalization and centralization” (Mac Laughlin 2001, 308). It turns out that the existence of multiple regional identities within a nation-state’s borders is quite important to fortifying the national mission: Internal difference within states is, as we and many other scholars argue, essential to the creation of a common purpose that is the defining feature of the modern state. Here we explore the idea of an internal “other,” which we define as the intentional construction of a region as different from, perhaps even antithetical to, national norms and

values, as an element of nation-building. Recent literature on regional identity and national identity, which we discuss in more depth later, discusses the “othering” process of regions, how “backward” regions get compared to more “modern” and “progressive” areas of the nation; however, these studies tend to accept the nation and aspects of national identity and national values *a priori*, without delving into how national values and identity are constructed largely in opposition to the “deviant” region in the first place. Thus our primary contribution is to bring these two themes together.

We ask how the Other becomes “emplaced” within national contexts (cf. “*Verortung*” in Lossau 2002; Schlottmann 2003). We contrast our approach with other approaches to regions, nation-states, and othering, particularly those under the rubric of “internal orientalism.” Two case studies from 19th century unification nationalisms in Europe assist in this exploration. The importance of understanding how these processes operate is neither simply a historical curiosity, nor is it relevant only at the scale of the nation-state. Rather, when one considers recent debates over global solidarity, cosmopolitanism, flat world geopolitics, etc, and how these are to be reconciled with persistent group identities and regional affiliations, it becomes clear that these debates are of central importance to understanding the relationship between “groupism”—still alive and well in contemporary times—and globalization (Beck 1997, 2007; Cheah and Robbins 1998; Entrikin 2003; Harvey 2009).

We begin our examination of the dialectical relationship between regional construction and nation-building with an exploration of the concept of the Other, and the basic question of whether nation-building presupposes the existence of the Other, internally or externally. Then, the connections between scholarship on national identity, nationhood, and nation-building, and

that dealing with the region are explored, drawing on work on “internal orientalism,” which has been posited in a number of recent papers by David Jansson as a means of explaining regional differentiation within nation-states (Jansson 2003a, 2007, 2010). While internal orientalism, as it is currently formulated, is highly informative, its major shortcoming is that it fails to engage the literature to which it hopes to speak, that is the literature on the region, specifically the ways in which regions are implicated in processes of nation-formation. We contend that the “othering” of a region is an essential part of the formation of a nation and of national identity; the formation and institutionalization of regions cannot be understood separately from the formation and institutionalization of the nation itself. The paper then explores the idea of regional internal “others” by means of two case studies that demonstrate how the marginalization of a particular region, or of a set of regions, by the state creates powerful and often enduring narratives, which often become the cornerstone of regional and even national identity. The article then turns to a discussion of how this approach can be applied in other spatio-temporal contexts.

Must there be an Other?

Before delving into the literatures on othering within national contexts, it is useful first to draw on political theory to ask whether constructing the Other must necessarily precede or accompany group identity formation at all. Current canon in the social sciences holds that group identity is relational, based on an “internal solidarity or cultural commonality” but also based simultaneously on the contrasts created in relation to others (Eriksen 1995). In light of these concomitant forces behind group identity, Eriksen proposes two modes of group identification: “we-hood” or a sense of shared identity based on a shared task, and “us-hood” as defined against an “external agent” (drawing on Sartre’s *Tertius*), which might be a real or imagined enemy

(427). Though there may be multiple oppositional identities, in practice it is often the “significant Other,” or the identity conceptualized as most opposed, most pressing, or most timely, that is brought to the forefront of identity questions. English is the opposite of French, e.g., or Protestant German is the significant other of Catholic German (ibid.).

Notions of the Other in national identity construction are based upon what political theorists refer to as the “particularist thesis” (e.g. Walzer 1992), and it is not entirely uncontroversial. We turn to the very important work of Arash Abizadeh (Abizadeh 2005) to situate our contribution within contemporary debates and, more importantly, to insert geography into those debates, which are curiously aspatial. Abizadeh critically reflects upon the relationship between group identity and global solidarity: Is it possible to have collective identity without the creation of an external Other? The key question is whether political identity can be created in a particular place absent the creation of a them, or other (see also Mouffe 2000). Much rides on this concept, or “metaphysical claim,” about the existence of collective identity and the presupposition of particularism in group identities. According to Abizadeh, there are two variants of the particularist thesis, one weak, the other strong. The weaker variant says that collective identity needs an external other (i.e., individuals that do not belong) “*in contrast to which* it can define itself” (emphasis in original). In this weaker variant, the nature of the relationship between group and other is left open; it is not necessarily antagonistic. The stronger variant of the particularist thesis posits that the relationship with the other must be antagonistic or adversarial (he calls this the “Schmittian version” based on Carl Schmitt’s (Schmitt 1996) examination of the relationship between sovereignty, the state, and the adversary.¹ Samuel Huntington’s espousal of a sort of irredeemable other in the case of American national identity could be seen as an extreme version of strong particularism (Huntington 2004). Abizadeh is confronting a common problem in

studies of identity, namely the chronic messiness in defining precisely those to whom “otherness” can be ascribed. In the absence of identifying what Abizadeh calls “an *empirically specifiable group(s) of actually existing concrete individuals*” (ibid., 55, sic), which for him is a near-to impossible task in practice, his conclusion is that collective identity does not *necessarily*, in fact, presuppose an Other. The world of groups and individuals—and of collective identity—that Abizadeh describes is one that operates everywhere and nowhere, and is thus aspatial. Yet when identity becomes mapped on a particular place or region (which it inevitably does), certain elements of that messiness can be glossed over. In other words, the undesirable can be mapped upon a specific region even if the “empirically specifiable group” cannot be identified.

Consequently, the Other, or s/he who possesses certain undesirable characteristics that stand in the way of progress, unity, cohesion, etc, can be assumed to inhabit a particular place based on empirical observation. The logical requirement that one be able to identify concrete individuals possessing the undesirable characteristic becomes, if not superfluous, then at least removed from the category of *sine qua non* to the construction of national identity by virtue of an Other. Our examples, and indeed nearly all cases of identity construction and nation building that involve an Other, internal or external, exhibit such contradictions and messiness. The Mezzogiorno, Italy’s southern half is not homogeneous, nor are the U.S. South or western China. But these places are constructed as repositories for backwardness and consequently become the spatial containers that are home to impediments to national progress. The position explored in this article is that difference in the service of identity formation is spatialized, and regions become the key sites where spatial evidence can be found.

A geographic reading of the other in relation to identity construction at one particular spatial scale (the nation-state), however, suggests that an internal other can be just as important as the external, and as a result, identity construction at any scale may still involve othering. Indeed, Abizadeh leaves this possibility open as well: “To be sure, a collective identity might be formed in contrast to, or even in combat with, an actually existing external other excluded from its membership. But it might also be constructed on the basis of difference from hypothetical values and the *imagined* collective identities centered on them, or on the basis of difference from the values of a past historical identity from which one wishes to mark one’s distance” (Abizadeh 2005, 58). Thus, while the possibility of group identity formation absent “the Other” remains open, constructing an Other proves a useful strategy in the process of constructing a unique group identity.

Spaces of Backwardness: Region and Nation in Dialogue

Geographers have long been interested in questions of regions and nation-states, and the parallel ways in which these spatial scales are constructed (Zelinsky 1980; Knight 1982; Paasi 1986; Markusen 1987; Paasi 1991; Hans 1995; Henley 1995; Häkli 1998; MacLeod 1998; Yiftachel 1999; Agnew 2001; MacLeod and Jones 2001; Clayton 2002; Paasi 2002a; Browning 2003; Amin 2004; Jones and MacLeod 2004; Barnes and Farish 2006; Deas and Lord 2006; Harrison 2006; Jonas and Pincetl 2006; Lagendijk 2007; Eriksson 2008; Paasi 2009). The region is and nearly always has been one of geography’s “central objects of study” (Allen et al. 1998), although specific attention to regions has waxed and waned throughout the discipline’s history. The study of regions experienced a revival in the late-1980s with the emergence of a “new regional geography” that rejected long-dominant notions of regions as passive backdrops and

instead theorized regions as active social actors (see especially Murphy 1991). New regional geography, then, was concerned with the geo-historical formation of regions and with understanding the contemporary implications of entrenched regional constructs.² Alongside the renewed interest in cultural-historical approaches to regions, much of the recent regional fascination has been focused on a “rediscovery” of regions as key sites for comparative advantage in an increasingly global economy (Amin 1999; Harrison 2008); this interest includes the study of regions as sites of capital accumulation, identity formation and social interaction (MacLeod 2001).

There is a vast literature examining regions: how they come into being, how they are reproduced, and to what ends they are invoked. An even vaster body of literature examines nationalism, nation-building, and the geographical construction of nation-states (Anderson 1983; Billig 1995; Gruffudd 1995; Brubaker 1996; Smith 1998; Herb and Kaplan 1999; Mac Laughlin 2001; Thompson 2001; Berndt 2003; Brubaker 2004; Herb 2004; White 2004; Agnew 2007; Jones and Fowler 2007a, 2007b; Sturm and Bauch 2010). The utility of employing geographical concepts such as scale, boundaries, and homeland in order to understand nations and nationalism has been well documented (e.g., Williams and Smith 1983; Jones 2009). When regions and the nation-state have come into dialogue in the literature, however, the tendency has been to focus on the rise of regional movements that seek autonomy inside or outside the state containers in which they exist (e.g., Agnew 2002). Regional difference within states, at least in much of political geography, has been seen as one of many centrifugal forces that challenge national identity, where the agency lies typically in the restive region (Agnew 2001; see also Clayton 2002; Bialasiewicz 2002; Raento and Watson 2000). What we observe is that very little work has examined how regional difference, and the reification of regional identity within states, is

implicated in creating and reproducing national identity. It is not just that regions are one of the geographical scales compositional of nations and nationhood, but indeed that there is a dialectical relationship between these two things.

The logic for this approach is revealed by the inherently geographical nature of identity at both the regional and national scales. Yiftachel has argued that bordering processes within nation-states—the building and maintenance of “internal frontiers”—are instrumental to the identification of areas in need of rehabilitation in order to conform to a unified national norm (Yiftachel 1998, 37). Going beyond this point, the persistent recognition on the part of the nation-state of an apparently economically and culturally weaker region serves to unify the rest of the nation-state by providing a fable of sorts, one that demonstrates the grandeur of national ideals and the dangers of deviating from them.

As Guntram Herb has argued, political power and national identity are defined first and foremost territorially, because control over territory is what “provides tangible evidence” of a nation’s existence (Herb 1999, 10). In the tension between power and identity, he continues, lie struggles over the geographical dimensions of the nation-state. The “spatial socialization,” the narratives and experiences that bind diverse peoples in a common national story, is tied intimately to a particular territorial homeland (*ibid.*, 17). Meanwhile, David Kaplan has pointed to the fact that in the process of nation-building, the project of “consolidating internal differences” into a unified identity can lead to conflict between competing notions of identity (Kaplan 1999, 36). This conflict, or “discordance,” arises between a dominant group and an aggrieved, often minority, group.

One important aspect of the internal dynamics of nation-states involves uneven economic geographies. John Agnew has described the “modern geopolitical imagination” that commonly translates time into space by conceiving of national development in terms of modern versus backward (Agnew 2003, 36; see also Williams and Smith 1983). This vocabulary, he points out, organizes the very ways in which people conceive of places, and leads them to “essentialize and exoticize,” turning relative differences into absolute ones (Agnew 2003, 45-47) and articulating “spatial differences in temporal terms (Agnew 2002, 68). From the Cold War came the notion that there were two competing alternatives for development, and it thus became important to have a “backward” Third World against which to define the modernity of the First World, or to put it succinctly, “Only by having a backward could there be a modern” (Agnew 2002, 70). The often precarious unity of nation-states has been strengthened by the identification of both internal and external others.

Internal Others: *Orientalism* and the Region

Such discourses of modernity and backwardness along with the identification of external others are fairly well understood. The foundation for studies of “othering” and for ideas of difference more generally, is Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (Said 1978). Said posited that the Orient was constructed by Europeans via the discourse of *Orientalism*. Through texts and visual representations, Europeans crafted the Orient as a mystical, exotic, and ultimately, disempowered place. Fundamental to the discourse of *Orientalism* was the (re)production of a system of binaries: Europe/the West as modern, masculine and normal; the Orient/East as backward, feminine and different. Said argues that the construction of the Orient as inferior and weak was a manifestation of European power and ultimately enabled Europeans to exert that

power over the Orient in material ways, largely through the processes of colonialism; however, Said cautions against conflating *Orientalism* and colonialism. Focusing his analysis predominantly on French and British engagement with Palestine and Egypt in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, Said was careful to point out that *Orientalism* predated, and undergirded, European colonialism in the Orient. But *Orientalism* reached its zenith during the colonial era, the nineteenth century. Thus, “othering” of different places—of places viewed as “modern” finding their inverse “backward”—was established as a fundamental part of European thought at a time when nation-states and national identities were being formed and grounded within Europe.³

Internal Orientalism

The theory of internal orientalism was first expounded by Schein (1997) in regard to post-civil war China; Schein argues that Chinese leaders contrasted what was envisioned as a modern, coastal China against an exotic and feminine interior. Schein’s work on China, which was primarily concerned with Han representations of ethnic minorities in the inland areas of the country, has been deployed in scholarship on ethnic minorities in Laos (Pholsena 2006), on the delegitimization and feminization of Turkish leftists and communists by pan-Turkists in the mid-20th century (Burriss 2007), and on masculinity and ethnic stereotypes in Singapore (Pugsley 2010). This work by Schein and other non-geographers, perhaps unsurprisingly, has focused not on the regional geographical aspects of the other, but on the groups who become othered in particular national contexts. Among geographers, the regional dynamics of internal orientalism have been explored by means of case studies in specific national contexts, such as the North–

South dynamic in Sweden (Eriksson 2008), and most fully in Jansson's work on the U.S. South (Jansson 2003b, 2007, 2010).

According to Jansson (Jansson 2003b), internal orientalism is “a discourse that operates within the boundaries of a state, a discourse that involves the othering of a (relatively) weak region by a more powerful region (or regions) within the state” (296). The development of a discourse of internal orientalism follows a pattern in which the weak region is first subordinated through internal colonialism and then assigned negative traits, such as cultural or moral backwardness, that stem from the colonial-like condition. As in *Orientalism*, the image of the subordinate region as inferior to and different from the rest of the state is reinforced through texts and images that produce a coherent discourse of “otherness.” Jansson argues that a valorized national identity is then constructed by contrasting the state against the internal other. In developing internal orientalism, Jansson draws attention on the dialectical relationship between regional and national identity construction in the U.S. South. This is a valuable endeavor, since analyses of the South (that is, the difference of the South) prior to the mid-1990s attempted to explain the Southern difference by contrasting the South to the North but not questioning how the two regional identities were in fact intertwined. Beginning in the mid-1990s, there was a growing strand of literature (especially by historians) that began to question the idea of using the North as a comparative region because, according to these scholars, much of the regional identity of the North had been built on othering the South. As Susan-Mary Grant's work has shown, scholars had accepted a standard narrative in which “the North = good” and “the South = bad” while neglecting the question of how the North came to be perceived as good in the first place (Grant 2000). In more recent years, that narrative has begun to be challenged as scholars have

explored this relationship between the North and South and the mutual construction of regional/national identity.

Jansson's work is a valuable contribution to geographical understandings of identity construction, but in our view he does not push us far enough. The theory of internal orientalism itself shares many of the same shortcomings as Said's *Orientalism*, which has been criticized for essentializing the West's engagement with other cultures and discounting resistance within those cultures (e.g., Young 1990). Most significantly, internal orientalism creates monolithic, dichotomous identities (e.g., state as modern, region as backward) and glosses over social and cultural differentiation within both the state and the subordinated region. In theorizing internal orientalism, Jansson acknowledges that people develop a multiplicity of identities, and thus may hold attachment to both the region and the state. Yet, while recognizing the importance of regional identity, to both individuals and to the theory of internal orientalism, Jansson's work is largely disconnected from the wider literature on the topic. Thus, while internal orientalism attempts to elucidate a geographically-based explanation for the formation and endurance of regions and regional identities, there is little engagement with the concept of the region itself within current studies of internal orientalism.

We propose a better connection between literature on internal orientalism and understandings of the region. Internal orientalism posits regions as passive, much as Said characterized the Orient as passive, in the processes of *Orientalism*. The notion of regions as passive conduits in identity construction contradicts much of the literature on the region, which in fact emphasizes the dialectical nature of regional identity construction with that of the nation-

state, other regions, etc. Here we are concerned specifically with theoretical perspectives on the region, and work that examines the formation and institutionalization of regions.

Of primary significance is the work of Paasi (Paasi 1986, 1991, 2002a, 2009), who has most championed a 'new' geography of regions. Paasi (2002b) argues that regions should be regarded as social constructs created through "historically contingent practices and discourses in which actors produce and give meaning to more or less bounded material and symbolic worlds" (804). As social constructs, regions are defined, interpreted, reinterpreted and contested; thus, the construction and institutionalization of regions and regional identity are social processes. This theorization of regions as products of social relations has led to efforts to better understand the practices and discourses associated with the creation and maintenance of regions, a broad undertaking that would seem to include recent work on internal orientalism. There are clear disjunctures, however, between theoretical perspectives on region and the theory of regional formation put forth by internal orientalism.

The most significant disconnect between theories of region and internal orientalism is the treatment of the region itself. As noted, internal orientalism characterizes "othered" regions as passive, contrary to theoretical perspectives on regions as active sites of social formation and for the enactment of human agency. By characterizing regions as passive, internal orientalism does not allow for those within "othered" regions to contest or resist the construction of the region, nor to develop alternative discourses about the region or about the state (a process similar to the Occidentalism proposed by critics of Said). Additionally, while Paasi and others have endeavored to develop a comprehensive framework for explicating the formation and institutionalization of regions across geographic and historical boundaries, internal orientalism

takes a piecemeal approach, studying “othering” in particular contexts (i.e., the U.S. South) rather than attempting to generalize on larger spatial and temporal scales.

While internal orientalism is surely a process through which totalizing and mutually reinforcing regional and national identities are created, we do not subscribe to the view that this is a linear process as posited in current formulations of the theory. Rather, we argue that the economic marginalization and cultural marginalization of a seemingly subordinate region are contemporaneous and dialectical processes, as the following case studies show. These cases raise questions at the national scale, and during historical periods when the construction of nation-states was at its peak but the processes by which group identity is spatialized, reified, and put into practice are relevant to spatial and temporal contexts.

Italy and Its Mezzogiorno

Internal orientalism is one process by which regions are created and institutionalized. It internal orientalism is a fundamental part of nation-building. The dichotomous logic of *Orientalism* was essential to European ideas of modernity during the colonial era. States such as Germany and Italy, which were latecomers to national identity formation in Europe and not coincidentally also not as heavily engaged in the colonial enterprise, are therefore useful places to examine how the logic of othering was turned inward. The creation of these “internal others” is one means by which enduring regions and regional identities emerged; thus, regions need to be understood as much a product of modernity as the nation-state itself.

The southern half of Italy (south of Rome and including Sicily) is a place of difference and a repository for that which was deemed undesirable in the making of the nation. The

Mezzogiorno's divergent development path has been a fixture of popular and academic geographical imaginations, inspiring (among other things) a voluminous literature exploring the history, geography, sociology, and politics of the north–south division (including Putnam 1993; Fukuyama 1995; Lumley and Morris 1997; Schneider 1998b; Dickie 1999; Agnew 2002; Dunford and Greco 2005; Wong 2006). Although difficult to identify a unitary discourse about the Mezzogiorno, the “Southern Question” in Italy historically

evokes a powerful image of the provinces south of Rome as different from the rest of the peninsula, above all for their historic poverty and economic underdevelopment, their engagement in a clientelistic style of politics, and their cultural support for patriarchal gender relations and for various manifestations of organized crime. (Schneider 1998a, 1)

A common mental map has existed in the popular consciousness in Italy that the farther south one goes, the more pronounced the objectionable traits become (Moe 2002, 37). The “vocabulary of backwardness and modernity” highlighted by Agnew (Agnew 2002, 61) has been a perennial feature of Italian national life since at least the mid-1800s, and the widespread belief, particularly among intellectuals, that Italy will have difficulty rising above the backwardness of its South illustrates how the institutionalization of a region can be an enduring feature of a nation-state (see also Pandolfi 1998). In the “moral geography” of Italy, the blame for the ills of the nation as a whole are often assigned their geographical origin, the Mezzogiorno (Agnew 2003, 42). As in the case of the U.S., the north–south division of Italy into a virtuous, prosperous half and a backwards, feudal half was not always so clear cut. The poet and essayist Giacomo Leopardi, for example, wrote in the first part of the 19th century that the South was in fact the original source of success on the peninsula—alluding to the great imperial, Roman past—because of southerners' more developed “imaginative capacities” (Moe 2002, 34). More recently, though,

and certainly for the vast majority of (mostly northern) observers, the value judgment of allusions to *il Mezzogiorno*, *il meridione*, *l'Italia meridionale*, or simply, “the South,” have been distinctly negative. Why so? And what are the implications of this geographical imaginary?

The changing political geographies set into motion by the Napoleonic wars meant that there was great incentive for Italy to unite in response to the consolidation of power in various other quarters of the European continent. As with all unification movements, however, the integration of culturally, economically, and politically distinct regions under the nationalist umbrella of one Italy presented quite a challenge. Early in the process of Italian unification it became clear that the economic underdevelopment of the South would complicate nation-building efforts. As the unification movement gained a wider following in the early 1860s, the southern half of Italy became “re-invented” and the problems of the South quickly became a national problem (Dickie 1999, 143). This process culminated in the Southern Question, which emerged with the publication of Pasquale Villari’s four “southern letters” in a Rome newspaper in 1875. Villari was at the vanguard of an intellectual movement that sought to galvanize bourgeois political elites with a realistic sense of just what it was they were dealing with in the South—cultural, economic, and social backwardness—and to apply “objective” social science to the problem in hopes of smoothing the way to nation building (ibid.).

The mid-19th century unification movement represents the key time period in which the South of Italy was institutionalized as an internally homogeneous region distinct from the North. Out of the initial impetus from Villari and others, there arose a nationalist, patriotic, modernist project of examining the other half of Italy so that the two halves might better gel in spite of their economic and cultural differences. Hence one sees the rise of the Mezzogiorno (literally:

“midday”) and the emergence of terms capturing both the region’s idiosyncrasies [*meridionalismo*] and the people engaged in the study of those idiosyncrasies [*meridionalisti*] (Lumley and Morris 1997). As Dickie points out, the Southern Question was fundamentally about the relationship between region and nation, and its resolution was viewed by the patriotic *meridionalisti* as essential to the building of an Italian nation (Dickie 1999, 53).

Villari and many others presaged much of what Antonio Gramsci identified more than a half century later about the economically bifurcated Italian nation. Gramsci was keenly interested in explaining how the rural peasant class of the Mezzogiorno grew to be dependent upon (“enslaved by”) northern Italian industrialists, and how those sympathetic with southerners’ plight could better communicate to peasants how northern industrialists were abusing them. He viewed the South as a feudal area, in contrast to the rapidly industrializing North, and unification brought the two halves together with northern elites at the political helm (Agnew 2002, 82). Although Gramsci gave quite a lot of agency in the nation-building process to the lower classes—suggesting strongly that not only intellectual elites are responsible for the construction of an Italian state (Mac Laughlin 2001, 244)—he nevertheless highlights a key feature of the institutionalization of the South of Italy as a region distinct from the North, namely, economic difference.

While the initial impetus for Villari’s positivist social science was to reform and redeem a cultural backwoods in order to integrate it economically with the North, the discourse about southern Italy focused instead on the region’s irredeemability. In particular, attention was paid to clientelism, patriarchal gender relations, patronage-style politics, and organized crime that were allegedly the main characteristics in the Mezzogiorno. These traits were implicated in the

region's perpetual economic underperformance, as various scholars sought to prove (Schneider 1998a).

Anxieties about the Mezzogiorno's economic vitality were paralleled by concerns about the cultural morality of the region. Among the bourgeoisie during the Liberal period of Italian history, national identity was largely constructed with a sense of angst about the "South," or as Dickie (Dickie 1999, 148) puts it, "what they feared and what they desired, what they found fascinating, alien, or exotic." Modernity and national cohesion were the imaginary bars to which other European societies were aspiring, and the northern elites viewed the South as a symbol of how un-modern, and indeed, un-European Italy was when judged against its peers. Partly as a result of this aspiration towards a "normal" nation, scores of scholars have attempted to explain the South's difference in cultural terms: the Mezzogiorno is economically backward, for example, because the culture of this imaginary half of the nation is backward, or at least fundamentally different from the culture in the North. Just a few examples are used here, but they are representative of a large body of literature and scholarship spanning many decades.

During the 1950s, the American political scientist and anthropologist Edward Banfield took to heart Villari's clarion call of a century earlier, applying social science to the problems of Italy. Based on ethnographic research he undertook while living with his wife and children in the southern Italian village of Chiaromonte (which he fictionalized as "Montegrano"), Banfield came up with his "moral basis for backward societies" ("amoral familism") using southern Italy as an example. He introduced English-language readers to

... a single village in southern Italy, the extreme poverty and backwardness of which is to be explained largely (but not entirely) by the inability of the villagers to act together for their

common good or, indeed, for any end transcending the immediate, material interests of the nuclear family. This inability to concert activity beyond the immediate family arises from an ethos—that of “amoral familism”—which has been produced by three factors acting in combination: a high death rate, certain land tenure conditions, and the absence of the institution of the extended family. (Banfield 1958, 10)

The “political incapacity” of these people was at least in part due to native ignorance: “The peasant [in Montegrano] is as ignorant as his donkey and the artisan is hardly less so” (ibid., 33). Banfield’s ethnographic research resulted in what he termed “a predictive hypothesis,” and the behavior exhibited by persons in the village (and presumably all of the Mezzogiorno) was summed up: “Maximize the material, short-run advantage of the nuclear family; assume that all others will do likewise” (ibid., 85). When compared to other places (northern Italy, St. George, Utah, and rural Kansas were three of Banfield’s comparators), the ethos of the Montegrano in practice dictated that he or she would be preoccupied with calamity and misfortune (ibid, 110). Preoccupation with fear, in turn, effectively prevented “effort and enterprise” directed at achievement, thus locking residents in the behavioral trap of an amoral familist. Northern Italians, and indeed Kansans, were capable of industry because they could avoid thinking in these irrational, short-sighted terms. Followers of Banfield will know that later in his career, he transferred similar hypotheses to explain urban poverty in the U.S. (Banfield 1970). People are poor not because of racism or structural economic relations, he argued, but because of particular groups’ inability to forego immediate pleasure for long-term success.

Images of southern Italy as the other are deeply intertwined with an imaginative, orientalist geography (Gregory 1994) in which the Mezzogiorno is a place of “untamed alterity” (Dickie 1999, 63), at once both “us” and “them.” In the absence of a far-reaching colonial empire, as in

the case of France and Great Britain—whose nationalist projects were not coincidentally much further along—“Italy’s Orient” was inside. Unsurprisingly, then, the orientalist representations of Africa shared much in common with those of the Mezzogiorno, as can be seen in illustrated publications such as *Illustrazione Italiana* (Dickie 1999, 106). The institutionalization of the Mezzogiorno as an othered, backward region has endured. As Dickie observed, modern Italy is still replete with stereotypes about its South, and he sees these as signifying anxiety about Italy’s place in Europe and the world.

Fascination, disgust, exoticism, and fondness are still on the palette of responses to the South’s difference. Stereotypical images of the South continue to be fenced around with interdictions that signal the limits of appropriate public behavior. Today, as in Umbertian Italy, ethnocentric remarks about the South can be made with a kind of transgressive relish; it is something one does more readily in private rather than in public. Yet the notion of a corrupt or maladministered South, alien to norms of modernity, is also still used to shame the nation into remedial action (Dickie 1999, 144).

Fixing the region: Germany, the *Kaiserreich*, and the Other

95. The German *Reich*.

Germany? But where is it? I’ve no idea how to find that country,

Where the learned begins, the political ends.

96. German National Character.

To build yourselves into a nation, that’s what you Germans hope, in vain;

Form yourselves, this you can, instead into freer human beings. (Goethe, Schiller, and Saupe 1852, 117, personal translation)

An adage common in the historiography of Germany is that there was no German history before 1871, the year of German unification. As Goethe and Schiller's distichs in the *Xenien* of 1797 suggest, even the two eventual symbolic literary giants of national unity themselves, at least in satirical mode, were highly skeptical of the notion of a unified Germany, either politically or culturally, nor apparently did they consider it an especially good idea. They were writing at a time when Hamburg, Vienna, or even Kant's Königsberg were by no means self-evidently part of the same political-geographic space. However, as in Italy and at approximately the same time, a combination of external and internal forces led to a consolidation of political power in Germany during the mid- to late-19th century. Indeed, the parallels in the unification and nation-building projects in 19th century Italy and Germany have been treated by some scholars as manifest (although thorough-going comparisons are curiously scarce). This was a period of consolidating states; during the decade when many of the key events of German and Italian unifications were occurring, Japan and the United States were also undergoing drastic ruptures in previous orders. Unlike in Italy and the United States, however, where the North–South dynamic was geographically clear cut and thoroughly documented, the regional geographies of nation-building in Germany have not been nearly as exhaustively examined as other aspects of unification, and are not as well understood as those of Italy. Similar to Italy, though, Germany did not possess a vast colonial empire; the frame of reference for identity construction for the nation was more inward-looking. Our starting point is the question of the so-called German *Sonderweg*, or special path of history relative to other states. The *Sonderweg* thesis is mainly concerned with “the overwhelming influence of Prussia” in the national development of

Germany (Applegate 1999). The key question in this regard is whether regions exhibited resistance or accommodation in the initial years of German unity, and how the non-conforming regions figured into the overall process of national unity (ibid.).

For our purposes, a very brief rendering of the history of German unification will suffice.⁴ In Central Europe, consolidation of German-speaking territories was viewed as inevitable in light of still fresh memories of the Napoleonic wars and an increasing realization in rapidly industrializing Europe that loose, tenuous associations such as the German Confederation (*Deutscher Bund*) or later North German Confederation (*Norddeutscher Bund*) were no match economically or politically for the growing powers in the West (France, Britain) and East (Russia). The mid-1860s to 1871 period saw the (temporary) resolution of power struggles among greater military powers (France, Austria-Hungary, and Prussia) over what areas would be included in a consolidated German Empire. A crisis over control of the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein in the wake of a dispute over who would assume the Danish throne resulted in a tense power-sharing arrangement between Austria and Prussia. During the mid-1860s, this situation would prove unsustainable, largely because these territories were far from Vienna, in the heart of otherwise firmly Prussian lands in northern Germany. The stage for the geopolitics of Central Europe from 1866 well into the 20th century was thus set: Prussia emerged as a dominant power; Austria remained a formidable power, but was excluded from the makeup of “Germany” despite being German-speaking; and a host of semi-powerful kingdoms, especially Saxony, Bavaria, and Württemberg, would assume their place in a “Lesser Germany” (*Kleindeutschland*, i.e., excluding Austria, as opposed to “Greater Germany” or *Grossdeutschland*). After a decisive and devastating defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871, in which the junior

German kingdoms allied with Prussia, a German Empire was declared in Versailles in January 1871 (Blackbourn 2003).

For the first time, “Germany” was a political-territorial, and not just a cultural, construct. As recounted by the historian Confino from newspaper articles of the mid-1880s, “For the first time in history, national boundaries defined the German homeland, giving it a specific ‘form’ and ‘shape’ (*Form und Gestalt*)” (Confino 1997, 62). Yet, Germans did not suddenly in 1871 put difference behind them and unite to become nation; that date can be seen instead as the beginning of a process of building national identity where there had previously been little (Confino 1997). Most importantly, particularly in the first decade of the fledgling nation-state, there were “internal enemies” who impeded the natural progression towards common identity and towards modernity as it was defined by so-called liberal progressives (Blackbourn 2003, 331; see also Foucault’s explorations of state racism and internal enemies in Foucault et al. 2003; and Foucault, Senellart, and Davidson 2007).

Indeed, as in Italy, modernization and progress were deeply implicated in nation-building, although prior to unification, Germans, like Italians, were perceived in Europe as being anti-materialist. Pre-unification Germans “celebrated the natural and organic over the mechanical, favored ‘culture’ (which was deep) over ‘civilization’ (which was shallow)” (Blackbourn 2003, 205). Karl Marx observed that Germans were not especially accomplished in the realm of modernization, and were underdeveloped relative to their economic potential, and that Germans had just begun to think about what others had done (Blackbourn 2003, 31). With the pace of industrialization quickening, and the answering of the German question with the 1871 unification, this relative sleepiness of Germany gave way to what the historian David

Blackbourn calls a “culture of progress,” a celebration of technology, modernity, and above all, forward progress (Blackbourn 2003, 205). Though the slogan “Made in Germany” as a mark of quality is most commonly ascribed to post-WWII consumer goods, it was in fact a product of German unification. The Southern states of Germany, however, were peripheral to this narrative, as they were to the political and economic heart of the new *Kaiserreich*. They had developed more slowly, and were relatively underdeveloped in relation to the newly industrialized and large-scale agricultural regions of northern Germany during the 1860s and 1870s (Tipton 1976).

Discourses of modernity and backwardness were intricately interlaced with those of religion and region. The *Kleindeutsch* solution “wreaked havoc” upon German Catholics, forcing them, according to Applegate, to choose between Germany and Rome even as the Pope was demanding “complete obedience” (Applegate 1990, 52). Catholics, who were geographically concentrated in Bavaria and Baden in the south, in the Rhineland between Koblenz and Cologne, and in parts of modern day Poland, were perceived to inhibit the emergence of both a coherent German identity and of Germany as an economic, cultural, and political powerhouse that would make this country respected in Europe and elsewhere. Catholics were backward, an impediment to the progress of the nation as a whole, and Otto von Bismarck was the most visible spokesperson for a widespread movement among liberals called the *Kulturkampf*, whose goal was the “symbolic exclusion of Catholicism from the hegemonial version of national culture” (Borutta 2003, 227). As Gross argues,

For liberal *Kulturkämpfer* the victory over France had outlined and fixed the boundaries of empire. This was a momentous achievement, but only one, and not the last war needed to unify the nation. Another campaign, this time waged inside the empire against the Catholic Church and its *doppelgänger*, was required to complete the moral, social, and cultural unification of Germany,

to secure the empire and the blessings of the Enlightenment. It required an effort, liberals imagined, not short of war, and while it may have been bloodless it was no less momentous not only for Germany, but for the world. (Gross 2004, 288)

The orientalized northern Italian vision of the alien, even African, southern Italian had its parallel in the Protestant northern German view of the “static, historyless Catholic” of *Oberbayern* (Upper Bavaria) and *Baden* in southern Germany (Borutta 2003, 227). As an editorial from the liberal *Volks-Zeitung* in 1869 during the period leading up to unification illustrates: the “hard-working ‘North German population’ whose ‘education and civilized outlook’ found expression precisely in the ‘indifference of a creative and industrious unbelief vis-à-vis the fairy-tale of idle prayer and contemplation’” . The “culture of progress” found itself in competition with people in those areas who looked to the Vatican as much as to Berlin for guidance.

The discourse of the anti-clerical *Kulturkampf* took many forms, and its virulence suggested the high stakes perceived in the struggle against backwardness by German liberals. German culture, so it was argued, was Protestant, and cultural Protestantism explained German progress (Weber and Kalberg 2009). “Catholicism,” as Blackbourn’s summaries of newspaper columns of the time suggest, “was a ‘brake on civilization,’ a ‘swamp,’ a symbol of ‘stagnation,’ a form of ‘pathology’” (Blackbourn 2003, 213). The intellectual center of German literature, historical sciences, and other branches of inquiry was discursively constructed as being in the Protestant, Prussian North (Gebhardt 2005). It was the intersection of conflicts over ultramontanism (privileging of papal authority) and “cultural Protestantism” with the founding of the nation-state that caused the severity of the *Kulturkampf* in Germany (Borutta 2003, 248). But while the historiography of German unification typically has focused on the narrative aspects and cultural implications of the cultural wars of the late 19th century for the entirety of German space,

neglected has been how this struggle was rooted in an effort to consolidate identity a particular place. For all its shortcomings as history, in some respects the 19th century teleological accounts of historians such as Sybel, Droysen, and above all Treitschke, that Prussia was destined to unite German nation—the so-called “Borussia myth”—better captured the geographical aspects of German unity. The geographical location of the “other” was not as clear in Germany as in Italy, but was rather more akin to the situation in Britain, where a “Celtic fringe” challenged the unity of the dominant English (Hechter 1975). In Germany, a Catholic fringe to the east, in the Rhineland, and above all in Bavaria, surrounded the “Protestant heartland of empire,” centering on Prussia.⁵ Modernity and progress were located in the Protestant parts of Prussia, in an arc from the industrial Ruhr to Berlin. Examinations of political voting culture and mobilization in Wilhelmine Germany offer compelling evidence of this aspect of the regionalization of Germany along similar lines to that in Italy (Lässig, Pohl, and Retallack 1995).

As is widely acknowledged today, the *Kulturkampf* failed, and the German nation-state was not homogenized in the way that liberals had wished. The cultural and political cleavages in the German Empire of the 1870s and 1880s were many—rural–urban, to labor–capital, left liberals and right liberals—and these eventually came to be more pressing than the confessional divide (Clark 2006, 571). For our purposes, the point is that regions possessing certain characteristics were involved in the construction of national identity at a key moment. The fear of economic stagnation, or indeed of the failure of becoming what potential or fate suggested possible, became emplaced, not just in a cultural identity of Roman Catholicism, but in regions, especially the southern Catholic parts of the new German state. Regions, rather than having their histories and identities celebrated, came in this time period to become the repositories either for undesirable traits standing in the way of national unity (e.g., Bavaria) or, alternatively, the home

of those characteristics that were crucial to the progress and success of the nation as a whole (e.g., Protestant Saxony and Prussia). Celia Applegate sees this process of regional devaluation and national valorization as part of a long history among European bourgeois elites of “stigmatizing the provincial, the particular, and the parochial” (Applegate 1999, 1160). A more geographically sensitive analysis might say instead that during this period of nationalization, parochial became associated with a particular spatial scale, that of the region.

The Eternal Other? On the Enduring Character of Regional Stereotypes

It may be useful to summarize briefly the essential elements of our case studies. In each case we locate key moments in which the identification of cultural-economic difference becomes interwoven with questions of an incipient nation-building project. In the cases of both Italy and Germany, there was an external political imperative for national unification based on contemporaneous events in Europe during the mid-19th century. At varying intervals after these events, the recognition of economic and cultural difference occurred, from the Villarian *meridionalismo*, in which northern Italian elites sought to explain and compensate for cultural-economic difference in the South of Italy, to the liberals’ *Kulturkampf* in Wilhelmine Germany, in which the new state marginalized its Catholic peripheries. In both cases, economic difference was accompanied by the assignment of unredeemable cultural differences: southern Italians as “amoral familists” and Africans; and southern German Catholics as uncultivated and disloyal (to Berlin *and* a culture of progress). In broad terms, it was these and other cultural traits (stereotypes) that provided those for whom it mattered validation for pursuing particular policy approaches to remediate structural deficiencies.

But how persistent is this process of othering? In the case of Italy, the Mezzogiorno continues to provide “a powerfully charged emblem of threats and problems,” (Dickie 1999, 145). The South provides a compelling narrative in contemporary political discourse surrounding the Northern League, based on yet another imagined geography that is portrayed as the antipode of the Mezzogiorno (this has been described in detail in Agnew 1997; Agnew, Shin, and Bettoni 2002; Shin and Agnew 2002; Giordano 2000). The actual economic geography of Italy can now no longer be clearly represented as a wealthy North and poor South. Since the early 1990s, the literature has emphasized the “process of internal differentiation” in southern Italy, what Rossi calls an post-Fordist “archipelago of local economies” and even of a “post-*Meridionalismo*” (Rossi 2004, 467).

In the case of Germany, developments since the 19th century have been even more dramatic. Witness, for example, the discourses surrounding Germany’s “reunification” since 1990, in which cultural difference once again plays a role for some in helping to explain the perpetual backwardness of one part of Germany. Instead of the virtuous, Protestant North invoking the Catholic South, however, it is now the culture differences of eastern Germans that are called into question; the “North-South” dynamic has been, in the words of Hans Gebhardt, “turned on its head” (Gebhardt 2005). The nature of cultural difference relates to intelligence and, more often, work ethic and (Diestel 2004). Such accusations came to the fore in the 2005 campaign for the federal chancellorship, when the candidate Edmund Stoiber, of the conservative (mainly Catholic), Bavarian CSU (Christian Social Union) party, complained in a campaign speech that east Germans, or as he termed them, “the frustrated,” got to determine the outcome of the election (Presseschau 2005). In the same speech he suggested that east Germans are less intelligent than Bavarians.

A cultural difference that may affect the lackluster economic performance of eastern Germany, according to some observers, is a lack of entrepreneurialism. If one starts a business in east Germany, one is more likely to encounter jealousy than praise or recognition, according to a business writer for the prominent intellectual newspaper *Die Zeit* (Schmid 2001, 833). In Germany, the post-war mythology of a national core mission in West Germany was intricately tied to the idea of the *Wirtschaftswunder*, or economic miracle, a necessary displacement of national energies and potentials from military and political power to industrial. Pallid economic performance, which followed after, but was not caused by, the country's 1990 reunification, threatened this myth in serious and fundamental ways. The examples presented here are few, but they each allude to a larger truth articulated by geographer Antje Schlottmann, namely that a "spatial logic" has emerged in Germany that treats the successes and failures of reunification as belonging to "essential entities and ... imagined containers with a certain quality or content" (Schlottmann 2008, 824). As in our previous case studies, this spatial logic includes both economic and cultural differences, but the important point is that the former laggard regions (Bavaria and Baden) are now the "winners," the economically prosperous and culturally progressive parts of the German state.

Questions about the enduring aspects of regional identities do not figure prominently in other examinations of the topic of othering in national contexts, such as internal orientalism. In light of the currently popular conceptualization of regions as the scale best suited to dislodge places from the constraints of entrenched national political and economic contexts, lest they be left behind in the pursuit of globalized economic prosperity, this topic is of continued interest. John Agnew recognized as much nearly ten years ago when he wrote that the relationship between the "symbolic as opposed to the economic aspects of regionalism" has not received

sufficient attention (Agnew 2001, 105–106). How such regional identities become ingrained in the public consciousness—and the enduring political and economic implications of those regional identities—remains only partially understood. In spite of an abundance of work exploring a variety of issues under the broad rubrics of “regionalism” and “regional geography,” there still is no generalizable explanation for the institutionalization of regions and regional identity within nation-states. Indeed, globalization has rekindled interest in internal differentiation within nation-states, as the state removes itself from its role as spatial redistributor (Brenner 2004). Thus, regions have implicitly and explicitly been framed as natural sites at which development strategies should occur, what Neil Brenner describes as “spaces of competitiveness” (Brenner 2000).⁶ In order to achieve success in the global economy, some regions may have to overcome negative traits assigned to through processes that we have described (cf. Jarosz and Lawson 2002; O’Brien and Leichenko 2003; Lawson, Jarosz, and Bonds 2008).

In discussing the utility of our approach to the dialectical relationship between regional identity creation and nation-building, we cannot capture all of the complexities of the case studies summarized above. Of course, these cases are unique, so caution is warranted in extrapolating from the foregoing, nor is it appropriate to wrest our case studies from their unique geohistorical contexts and plank them upon a rigid theoretical framework. National and regional identities are the product of particular sets of geographical and historical circumstances in specific locations. Nevertheless, the foregoing examples show that the normative goals of integrated national identity—a symbolic, discursive, even moral, center or *nonpareil*—can result in similar processes across time and space; it follows that these processes merit additional empirical inquiry. Our case studies illustrate that discourses of difference often say as much

about the anxieties of the nation at large as they do about a specific othered region, and this is no less true today than it was in the 19th century. The projects of Italian and German unification, for instance, were ones of modernization and Europeanization as well as a response to political consolidation in other parts of Europe. By locating pre-modernism, feudalism, and primitiveness in the southern half of Italy or in the Catholic regions of Germany, elites' nation-building missions were fortified, and blame for failures along the path of unification could be located in their proper places.

Conclusion

This article has been informed by recent geographic work on internal orientalism, which is a valuable starting point for attempts to theorize the mutual construction of regional and national identity. The processes of othering are rarely as linear and tidy as proposed in some current formulations of the theory; rather, othering involves a host of concomitant processes that work together to produce economically and culturally differentiated regions. As this article has shown, these consequences of regional othering are fundamentally implicated in the projects of nation-building and national identity construction, suggesting that our studies of such phenomena need to take regional othering into account. We do not mean to imply that there is one relationship, one theory that is generalizable to all cases. But our discussion clearly shows that there is a need for further investigation of how regions come into existence as part and parcel of the creation of nations.

By focusing on regional and national identity construction, our attempt is not to sidestep work in recent decades that has placed regions and nation-states in their global contexts and shifted attention from the territorial dimensions of these places to their networked, relational ties

(Amin 2004; Yeung 2005). The “unraveling” of nation-state territoriality in the wake of global economic integration, urban resurgence, and the rise of supranational and cross-border institutions (Brenner 2004, 5) surely means that what unfolded in 19th century Germany or Italy cannot be translated directly to the present. Indeed, the case studies we cite have each been interrogated in recent times less for their presumed “backwardness,” but for their cultural and economic heterotopia, the dynamism of certain parts of the Mezzogiorno (Guerrieri and Iammarino 2006) and southern Germany as the exporting champion of the reunified state (see e.g. Cooke and Morgan 1998). Nevertheless, what we have done here has relevance for questions of nation-building and nationalism in various quarters of the world.

The relationship between the region and the nation-state continues to provide a rich source of both conflict and comity. The vast number of entryways into the overarching question “What does globalization mean for national identity?” certainly also includes the question of how different regional development tracks *within* a nation-state challenge an extant unified sense of identity or inhibit its further development. Interrogating the dialectical relationship between the region and national identity, with the help of conceptual aids such as boundary-making, core-periphery relations, and territoriality (Flora, Kuhnle, and Urwin 1999), should be at the core of inquiry in political geography. As Antje Schlottmann (Schlottmann 2008, 824) and others have pointed out, the processes of binarism (us/them, here/there, inside/outside) that create “categories of difference and identity, and of exclusion and inclusion” are still very much a part of human geographies throughout the world. It is the endurance of these categories more generally, and the endurance of regions and regional identity more specifically, that need to be a part of future work on regional and national identity construction.

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Notes

1. Schmitt, so Abizadeh, “conflates internal and external ‘others’” (Abizadeh 2005, 51).

Abizadeh argues that all of social science operates in some way under the shadow of particularism (he does not mention geography specifically). He critiques the particularist thesis (or antic cosmopolitan thesis), which forms the basis of much of political theory about identity because it conflates individual identity with collective identity (making a collective identity “particular”) and is premised upon the nation being “invested in the modern notion of sovereignty,” which itself is based on an unnecessary conjoining of external and internal sovereignty (Abizadeh 2005, 50).

2. New regional geography was meant to represent a paradigmatic change in thought about the region, but the literature suffered from the absence of a unifying theoretical or philosophical approach. The “philosophical confusion” (Agnew 1999) that characterized the new regional geography impeded the theoretically-informed regional approach from coalescing into a coherent framework that could speak to broader questions of regional identity, national identity and the

relations between them. Emerging at a time when the world was undergoing radical economic and political reordering, the new regional geography, especially with its emphasis on the historical approach, did not seem capable of explaining much about the contemporary world, and by the mid-1990s, a political-economy interpretation of regions, often called “new regionalism” began to take root.

3. Other scholarship in this vein includes recent work on Balkanism and balkanization (Agnew 2009; Todorova 2009) and Wolff’s influential work on the creation of the geographical concept of “Eastern Europe.” He illustrates that this now taken-for-granted regional construct was in fact a modern creation and was tied up with notions of the supposed backwardness of this area in relation to the West . Ezequiel Adamovsky, meanwhile, persuasively argues in his work on the orientalizing of Russia that such dichotomies are problematic because the successful role is inevitably ascribed to one part, while the “other” region is left to justify its lack of development. Echoing a range of subaltern scholars, Adamovsky describes the consequences as being that “the narrative of the West constructs a narcissistic, self-sufficient, self-identical image of *itself*, by subalternizing its *others*” (Adamovsky 2005, 615, emphasis in original). In this case, Adamovsky shows how Russian history is constructed as one of repeated failures as a result of Russia lacking those western European traits required for success. There are clear parallels between this narrative and the ways in which regions within nation-states are constructed.

4. Unsurprisingly, a voluminous history of this period exists, covering all different aspects of unification. Particularly compelling accounts are to be found in Blackbourn 2003; Blackbourn and Retallack 2007; Evans 1997; and Gross 2004.

5. There were twice as many Catholics in Prussia (in Silesia and the Rhineland) as there were in Bavaria, but Bavaria was viewed as being essentially Catholic because of a large, culturally dominant population in the southern part of the Kingdom (Blackbourn 2003, 197).

6. Unlike new regional geography approaches, new regionalist literature emphasizes the functional role that regions play in globalized strategies of economic development. Regions emerge in an assumed partial vacuum where nation-states, the previously unrivaled containers and orchestrators of economic activity, had once been firmly planted. These new regions are the result of local initiatives in response to global processes, and as such they often reflect the “ultra-liberal rhetoric of the borderless world” (Paasi 2002b, 807) promulgated by popular sages of the region such as Kenichi Ohmae (1995) since the end of the Cold War. Whereas the “old” economic geography of regions examined the presence of raw materials, agricultural potential, labor availability and specialization, the political-economic geography of regions is largely premised on an assumption that the economic success of regions owes in part to other, often less tangible, cultural or institutional assets and attributes. Consequently, regions have been examined as the appropriate scale of analysis for interrogating the competitiveness of spatially proximate assemblages of “postindustrial, knowledge-based” industries (James 2006, 289; see also Keating 1998; Scott 1998; Storper 1997).

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