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Banal Nationalism and New Zealand Human Geography

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
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Abstract

Nationalism has often been linked with the 'irrational other', and consequently, as a form of nationalist discourse, the routine articulation of national identities in 'Western' nations has often been overlooked. In order to uncover the routine nationalism of 'Western' nations the thesis draws upon the theoretical concept of 'banal nationalism' in combination with poststructuralist ideas of a performative subjectivity. Using this approach the thesis presents a discursive analysis of a series of human geography texts presented in the *New Zealand Geographer* between 1945 and 1990. During this period the thesis identifies a series of epistemological discontinuities in New Zealand human geography, partly reflecting New Zealand human geography's position *vis-à-vis* Anglo-American human geography. However, the thesis also identifies a common thread in New Zealand human geography, that reiterates human geography's relevance to 'the nation'. Through the banal and rhetorical reiteration of 'the nation' in New Zealand's human geography discourse the thesis argues that New Zealand human geography has performatively constituted the New Zealand 'nation' as the unimagined context for social life. In this sense the thesis suggests that, rather than merely reflecting the social context in which New Zealand human geography is situated, through the performative unimagination of 'the nation', New Zealand human geography is a partly constitutive of that 'nation'. Consequently, the thesis notes that geographers need to maintain, and develop, a critical attitude towards the banal elements of social life, because it is through these banal elements that myriad forms of power are expressed.

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