

Nationality Report. Dec 2014

Nationality is a complex topic with a reputation – at least for this group - of causing problems than benefits. There is overwhelming support for the idea of nations consciously deciding what their nationality should be about.

Post Scottish referendum and with serious ongoing challenges in Ukraine, Syria and Palestine to name but a few, in this next Thinking Tank we will take an open minded, open hearted and challenging look at the concept of nationality and its value and price in modern society.

We gathered an international group of thinkers who shared over 200 ideas and on nationality during the 45 minute discussion. What does it mean to us today and how can we ensure it does more good than harm?

All items in *italics* are verbatim comments that achieved at least 40% support. Those in **bold** were supported by at least 50% of the people in the discussion. The Wordclouds show frequency of words weighted by degree of support from the crowd.

GROUP DYNAMICS

For most of the group (69%), nationality was considered important, though there was a significant minority (20%) who felt it to be of little importance.

Consensus was around average in this debate at 30% (vs Thinking Tank benchmark of 29%) and showed typical level of activity (average 14 messages per person). The high level (38%) of statements which split the vote and the polling results from Q1 suggest this was a discussion with two main points of view. All participants were similarly active, the discussion was not dominated.



As often happens in the Thinking Tank debates, there was a more engagement and consensus building than average with 26% of statements building on prior comments by another participant (compared to benchmark for this tool of 18%)

KEY CONCLUSIONS

The theme of nationality is broad ranging from personal feelings about our own nationalities to the global impact of the concept of nationality existing at all and where it might more usefully head for the sake of all of us. Despite the range of nationalities and ages in the dialogue, there are many aspects of the topic where the group share similar feelings.

TOP 3 THEMES

The top 3 themes explained here account for 26% of the 35 themes identified in the whole dialogue.

1. A sense of nationality is a basis for war

Considering all comments and weighting them by the degree to which they are supported by the group, the strongest consensus to emerge on any aspect of nationality (9% of total) is that of warfare as a hazard.

Hazard of nationality: build nationalism into extreme competition and conflict

Hazard: conflicts and wars

Hazard: hatred

Hazard: since nationalism caused the world wars, a less emotional view of it would be better

2. Multi-cultural interaction is the way forward

A similar degree of consensus is around the concept that the more contact there is between different nations the better the chances of avoiding the hazards of warfare, prejudice and stereotyping. These are the top actions suggested to mitigate the hazards of nationality

Bridging diversity and overcome cultural misunderstanding

Create spaces for multicultural encountering

Interaction and relationships, getting to know each other

3. We could all do with developing a more conscious sense of nationality

With the exception of new nations, most countries do not have a clear or explicit sense of what nationality means to them and the group also feel strongly that we should find ways to

develop this. In the poll, 93% feel it is important to develop ways for conscious reflection on a nation's values.

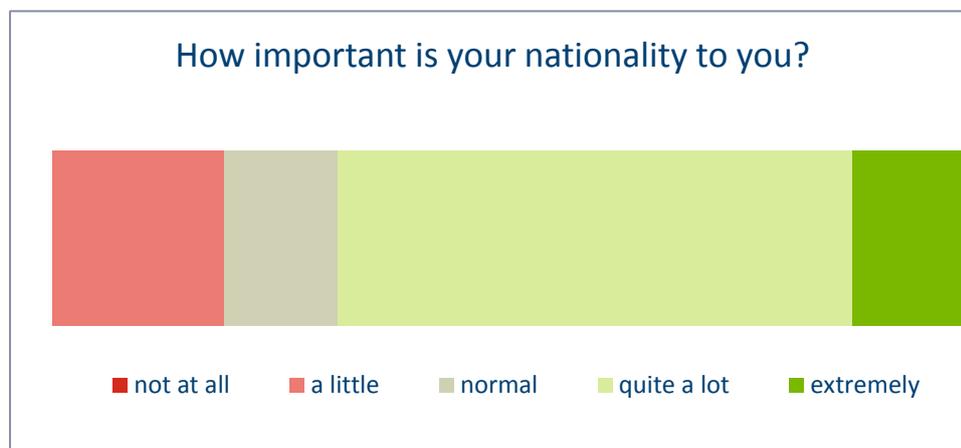
I'd be happy to have a nationality I identified with

I feel worried that indeed it is a rising topic and there are no clear answers on why and on what it means good or bad and what we can/should/may do about it . There seems to be a call for more reflection

Thinking about what your country should stand for TODAY is a worthwhile exercise but forgetting the past is dangerous

OTHER OBSERVATIONS

THE MAJORITY CONSIDER NATIONALITY TO BE IMPORTANT



Nobody finds nationality to be of zero importance and for the majority it matters quite a lot. Interestingly several participants changed their position from less important to more important during the subsequent discussion, suggesting that nationality has become something of a lost subject that could well be ripe for reconsideration.

The strongest reasons for valuing nationality are around shared values and a motive to behave according to those values.

I see looking at nationality as a means to help think of what you want to achieve political and by other means in your country to make it better.

Nationality could be a rallying call instead of a forgotten concept. It could make people step up

It is a definition of shared cultural values and rules

I am proud when my country does something great for people who need help

Other reasons include sport and leisure, a structure for countries to interact, a feeling of being at home and standing together for something.

Create a framework on which a sense of belonging can be founded

Nationality helps bring a variety of people under the same banner, allows people from different places to form a bond of some description with each other

PROBLEMS IN THE AREA OF NATIONALITY

This tends to be laid at the door of the political system, echoing the feeling in previous Thinking Tanks (and the media at large) that it has become detached from reality and no longer able to deliver valued results.

No extremist politicians

Block: [on nationality as a good thing] short term politicians' mandates

Broken party political system

THERE ARE SOME ACTIONS THAT COULD ENHANCE THE CURRENT STATUS OF NATIONALITY

There is awareness of the need to overcome the tendency to use nationality as a lazy shorthand to treat large and diverse groups of people as one thing. Rather the group favours harnessing nationality to improve internationality and mitigate against the risks of nationalism as a divisive force

Bridging diversity and overcoming cultural misunderstanding

Create spaces for multicultural encountering

[we need] interaction and relationships, getting to know each other

We need to be proud of our nationality from a historic perspective but agree to live by internationally agreed rules and culture moving forward

[risk] lack of understanding of the differences between National Values and Nationalism

[we need] open culture on diversity... let's have a European dream

And particularly we see a call for a **conscious sense of nationality** where values are shared and explicit instead of an accumulation of the past (though that cannot be discarded)

I'd be happy to have a nationality I identified with

I believe that national values should be formulated, and communicated widely

Thinking about what your country should stand for TODAY is a worthwhile exercise but forgetting the past is dangerous

There are no clear answers on why and on what it means good or bad and what we can/should/may do about it . There seems to be a call for more reflection

I think that we should have shared values on appropriate levels of welfare

TOP 10 STATEMENTS FROM WHOLE DISCUSSION (RANKED STRONGEST FIRST)

1. I dislike when others use it as a label and tell me who I am according to my nationality
2. I dislike the lack of openness to others cultures
3. [Benefit] Bridging diversity and overcome cultural misunderstanding
4. [Need] No extremist politicians
5. Rather avoid my nationality, refer to city, region or continent
6. Hazard : build nationalism into extreme competition and conflict
7. Nationalism can be a useful tool, such as in America where they use it to bring people under the same flag. But it is too often abused and has caused numerous wars -- it promotes an inward-looking culture that is afraid of people that don't fit within it
8. I'd be happy to have a nationality I identified with
9. Block : lack of understanding of the differences between National Values and Nationalism
10. I deplore Britain's colonial history and the isolationist support for UKIP

CONCLUSION

For most of us in the discussion it was the first time we had considered nationality in this way for a while. As we explored, we warmed to the idea that it has a role in modern society – and that, left to its own devices, it can easily become more of a force for division than cooperation. It appears, at least to this Thinking Tank, that the time has come for all countries to re-examine what their nationality stands for.

Catherine Shovlin

Founder of The Thinking Tank

23.12.14

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