



CALL FOR PAPERS

## **THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF NON-TERRITORIAL AUTONOMY IN EUROPE – A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

University of Vienna, 15-17 September 2022

‘The idea of non-territorial national autonomy, despite being widely recognised theoretically, is not acceptable in practice to those who are not used to it,’ wrote Max Laserson in a Latvian newspaper in 1922. One hundred years later, the sentiment expressed by the Latvian-Jewish parliamentarian remains largely unchanged: despite a steadily growing body of literature on NTA since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present, practical implementations of the idea over the same period have – seemingly – remained few and far between. A closer look, however, reveals that this original idea of managing ethnic diversity in a modern state, most comprehensively articulated in the works of the Austrian Social Democrat Karl Renner at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, has received much wider practical implementation than first meets the eye. In fact, over the past hundred years, the idea of NTA – in its hybrid forms and under different guises – has travelled very far both in time and in space.

We invite scholars to tackle the question of why, then, NTA in its pure form has remained, in wide public perception, a moth-balled intellectual curiosity, rather than an actual blueprint for solving the dilemma of ethnic diversity in a world of nation-states. Is it because despite its non-territorial aspect, it has been viewed by nation-states, with invariable suspicion, as a clever prelude to more territorial demands on the part of ethnic minorities? Has perhaps the very idea of divorcing the nation from territory appeared as too counter-intuitive to warrant wider consideration by policy makers? Or is it because ethnic minorities themselves have not been convinced that NTA is enough for the successful maintenance of their cultural identity? Just how much do the chances of practical implementation of this idea depend on which ideological camp it has come from? Or does the explanation lie in the fact that NTA has often been suspected of leading to the essentialization of ethnicity? Finally, was Kant right all along in claiming that ‘when the theory did not work too well in practice, the fault lay, not in the theory, but rather in there being not enough theory’ – in other words, is the NTA theory itself overdue for an update?

The aim of our conference is to bring together scholars with a long-standing interest in NTA with a view of undertaking an energetic multidisciplinary revision of the history of the concept, from its theoretical origins and antecedents in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to actual implementations – in different forms and guises – during the 20<sup>th</sup> century; and, finally, to the traceable historical influences on current diversity arrangements. Our ultimate goal is to bridge the existing conceptual gap between theory and practice of NTA across the past 150 years, and we will endeavour to publish a special issue of a peer-reviewed journal based on the conference’s

proceedings. We invite original submissions that would fall into one of the following broadly-defined categories:

**1. NTA and the State – Friends, Foes, or Substitutes?**

Should NTA be a form of minority protection in a nation-state or a way to organise a multinational state? Should there be an a-national state *on top* of the non-territorially organised nationalities, or should the non-territorially organised nationalities *be* the state? Is NTA, ultimately, a bigger encroachment on the conception of the nation- state than territorial minority protection, as it questions the state's very fundamentals? Is NTA the lowest form of self-rule for minorities, when territorial autonomy is out of reach?

**2. Cui bono?**

Who benefits from NTA and who does not? How NTA needs to be designed in order to appease dominant *and* non-dominant groups alike? Is NTA's design affected by top-down vs. bottom-up implementation settings? Can/did NTA preserve or even foster national identities?

**3. NTA, Identity and Belonging in different political settings**

Who belongs to the group? How were national registers set up in practice? Who was entitled to decide in case of doubt? Objective versus subjective criteria? Who was entitled to speak for the group?

**4. 'That May be Correct in Theory But It Won't Work in Practice' – Right or Wrong?**

How did NTA regulations work in practice? What were the practical obstacles that hindered NTA implementation? What were the concerns of contemporary critics of those implemented NTA regulations? Why/how were already existing NTA regulations abolished or watered down?

**5. Legal Aspects of NTA**

Who is the sovereign? Who has the right to determine the scope of autonomous affairs? What is the basic unit of autonomy?

**6. NTA and International Minority Protection**

Who perceives NTA as a threat to the international political order? Who promotes NTA in order to give agency to stateless nations? Do states seek to enhance their international reputation by implementing NTA?

**7. NTA and Ideology**

How did NTA adapt to different ideological settings? Which conceptual mechanisms were used to translate NTA into various ideologies? Is NTA's ideological flexibility exceptional, or are other models of accommodating national diversity, e.g. federalism, equally adaptable?

**8. Overlooked NTA arrangements / NTA in combination with other forms of minority protection**

Where can we find concealed NTA regulations? What are NTA elements in non-NTA minority protection applications, including both outright and implicit connections? Is it useful to search for NTA in every nook and cranny?

## Further Particulars

The deadline for submitting abstracts (max. 500 words) is **10 June 2022**. Please send your abstract to [ntautonomy.iog@univie.ac.at](mailto:ntautonomy.iog@univie.ac.at).

Each panel will be assigned a discussant, and we will kindly ask all participants to submit their papers by **30 July 2022**.

The working language of the conference will be English.

Accommodation and travel costs will be reimbursed through the ENTAN-COST scheme.

If you have any questions, please contact us at [ntautonomy.iog@univie.ac.at](mailto:ntautonomy.iog@univie.ac.at).

## About the Organisers

We are an international team of seven researchers working on the five-year ERC-funded project ‘Non-Territorial Autonomy as Minority Protection in Europe. An Intellectual and Political History of a Travelling Idea, 1850-2000’ that is based at the Institute for East European History of the University of Vienna. More about our project on <https://ntautonomy.univie.ac.at/en>.

This conference is co-organised by the COST Action ‘ENTAN – The European Non-Territorial Autonomy Network’ ([www.entan.org](http://www.entan.org)).

We are looking forward to greeting you in Vienna,

*Timo Aava*

*Anna Adorjáni*

*Matthias Battis*

*Marina Germane*

*Börries Kuzmany*

*Oskar Mulej*

*Yuki Murata*

