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Monica Heller, Lindsay Bell, Michelle Daveluy, Mireille McLaughlin and Hubert Noel, *Sustaining the Nation: the Making and Moving of Language and Nation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016; vii+ 271 pp. £64.00/US\$99.00 (hbk), £25.99/US\$ 39.95 (pbk).

**Reviewed by:** Khawla Badwan, *Department of Languages, Information and Communications, Manchester Metropolitan University, United Kingdom*

This is a book about mobility, roots, and identities while struggling to go ‘home’ or go ‘free’ in an increasingly globalised world. It is based on a project in Canada which investigates the lived experiences and personal trajectories of franco-mobile workers. The project, interestingly, considers both mobility across time and across space to construct an understanding of the challenges faced by francophone Canadian mobile workers who try to sustain a sense of a nation, belonging, and continuous cultural histories while trying to catch up with the impacts of globalisation and neoliberalism on the global and local economies of which they are part. The book aims to construct a discourse of ‘roots and routes’, ‘mobilities and moorings’ to discuss how a nation can be reimagined at times when rooted communities are no longer sustainable. In particular, it looks at how language in mobile Canadian francophone communities continues to be a *marker* for belonging as well as a *commodity* which, on its own, does not facilitate social mobility for uneducated francophone workers who typically have to mobilise digging more sites in the extraction industry.

Throughout the book, the authors emphasize that late capitalism and the unprecedented scale of global mobility and migration have prevented the construction of a homogenous society with monolingual ideologies and a standard language, which significantly disturbs and challenges the canonical image of a nation. Still, the authors maintain that the concept of a ‘nation’ as the ‘usual’ way to organise and describe ourselves is unlikely to disappear because many individuals will continue to create bridges as they move back and forth.

The book discusses the historical status of English and French in Canada and how under changes in colonial conditions in 1755 Britain demanded allegiance to the crown. Failing to achieve this, many French settlers were deported while others took shelter in certain parts of Canada. Such political tensions rendered the French language as problematic. This affected the lives of francophone Canadians who initially continued to gather in certain cities and worked mainly in the extraction industry, digging natural resources. Such job profiles affected francophone workers in two ways: a) they were expected to be always on the move and b) they were less educated and mainly monolingual as their jobs did not require educational qualifications. However, with the rise of knowledge and service industry and the introduction of new bureaucratic procedures for applying for jobs via online applications and written resumes outlining skills and qualifications, many monolingual francophone workers have been left at disadvantage because they lacked major human resources such as English language and IT skills. As a result, many were driven to look for less demanding jobs in places afar, receive new training, or wait for government initiatives to keep them locally. This created tensions between what it means to be a francophone Canadian rooted in a land (if at all possible) and a flexible worker released from ties to land and nation. In response to these changing conditions, two types of francophone mobile workers emerged: *resource extraction workers* on whom English was imposed and who did not seem to have much to say about linguistic identity and *cultural entrepreneurs* who had more to say about nationalist understanding of linguistic identity. The authors, then, move to link these two types with class positions arguing that francophones elites have benefitted from sustaining nationalism to preserve their status in francophone communities. However, the rise of cosmopolitan bilingual francophones and the commodification of ‘French-ness’ have destabilised what it means to be a ‘francophone’. This was further complicated by the arrival of immigrants and their families filling service sector jobs.

The discussion presented throughout the book offers an understanding of how nations are relationally constructed among stakeholders in processes strongly tied to economic changes, class dynamics, mobility and immobility as well as the potential to have forms of symbolic capital convertible to

material capital in today's globalising symbolic markets. The book concludes with a dynamic interpretation of a 'nation' with a no end state: 'the nation ravel, re-ravel, and unravel, all at once, sometimes recognizably, but more and more frequently, transforming into something which has yet to take shape' (p. 255). This leaves the reader with a new conceptualisation that matches the unprecedented scale of mobility and economic changes in contemporary societies. However, one might wonder whether the rise and return of nationalism in many parts of the world would bring back and perpetuate the canonical image of a nation with a homogenous community. How would the contemporary rise of xenophobia and nationalistic spirits challenge the authors' dynamic conceptualisation of a nation? How would political elites benefit from reviving and sustaining nations? How would mobile cosmopolitan citizens equipped with convertible symbolic capital contribute to constructing new discourses of nationalism at a larger scale? These are valid questions to ask given that the book's contribution can be further extended to other contexts around the world.

Finally, this valuable ethnography along with contemporary sociolinguistic research on migration, mobility, and multilingualism in a globalised world helps develop a deeper understanding of what it means to be a citizen, a person, and a subject. Similar projects are needed to investigate the trajectories of minority groups in other parts of the world. That is why readers of this book would have benefitted from further explanations about the study's untraditional ethnographic approach that embraced mobility, bilingualism and feminist approach.