

# Introduction Volume 9

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The small Estonian city of Narva recently caught the attention of the international press. As the conflict in Ukraine rages on, Estonian authorities decided to remove a Soviet-era tank that was put on a pedestal. The Estonian government described how these Soviet-related monuments – in the wake of the recent conflict – ‘opened wounds in our society’.<sup>1</sup>

The removal of the tank should not come as a surprise: as (geo)political conflicts or disturbances arise, the role of monuments (and their place in the public space) is being reconsidered, often leading to their reinterpretation, removal, or even destruction. Why do monuments figure so prominently in these discussions, and what does their removal or reinterpretation tell us of specific historical or socio-political contexts?

These were some of the questions being asked during the (online) NISE conference *National forgetting and memory: the destruction of ‘national’ monuments from a comparative perspective* in March 2021. The articles in this volume all stem from the conference and address a wide range of topics related to the removal or reinterpretation of monuments (and public spaces) in cases ranging from Europe to North America. The articles highlight the complex interplay monuments have with wider historical and socio-political contexts, and how throughout history debates have been waged on monuments and their role in the public



sphere. In addition to the articles published in this volume and the next, the lectures presented during the conference can also be consulted online at <https://vimeo.com/nisenationalmovements>.

Starting from the next volume, *Studies on national Movements* will also include a new section on 'Digital Humanities'. The section will pay attention to different projects related to the study of nationalism and national movements in different cases and time periods, highlighting the beneficial role digital tools can play in our understanding of nationalism and national movements, and further inducing possible comparative or transnational research.

Finally, NISE has recently seen a change of personnel, as administrator Hanno Brand will move on to new endeavours. As NISE's new administrator, I want to once again thank Hanno for all his work, and hope that I can do as good a job as he has done throughout these last years.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/16/estonia-removes-soviet-era-tank-monument-amid-russia-tensions-narva>