

‘The spectrum of island sovereignty: exploring the spaces between independence and dependence, statehood and non-sovereignty, autonomy and control’: A special thematic section of *Island Studies Journal*, 15(1), May 2020

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Questions of sovereignty have long played a key role in discussions surrounding islands. The decolonisation process in the second half of the 20th Century turned many islands and archipelagos into sovereign states, yet it stalled before reaching many others – especially the smallest of island territories. Furthermore, many non-sovereign small islands possess feelings of a distinct national identity without generally being regarded as having been in a colonial situation with the larger states (sometimes mainland states and sometimes larger islands in an archipelago) of which they form a part. Various elements of islandness have been interpreted as both driving *and* mitigating against desires for independence and the ability to imagine a place as a state in waiting. It is thus that oceans and seas around the world have come to host a mix of sovereign and non-sovereign island territories.

Early studies into small island economies posited how they might benefit from close links with larger economies in ways that ran counter to mainstream (and mainland) economic thinking (Bertram & Watters, 1985; Bertram, 2006; Baldacchino, 1993; Poirine, 1998), while influential research by Armstrong and Read (2000) showed more broadly that the economies of non-sovereign territories seemed to outperform those of microstates. The study of the appeal of non-sovereign solutions has become a cornerstone of the burgeoning field of island studies in the 2000s (Baldacchino & Milne, 2000; Karlsson, 2009; Baldacchino, 2010; McElroy & Parry, 2012; Baldacchino & Hepburn, 2012; Bonilla, 2013; Overton & Murray, 2014; Bertram, 2015; Grydehøj, 2016; Prinsen & Blaise, 2017; Favole & Giordana, 2018; Grydehøj, 2018).

Questions remain, however, regarding the extent to which the highly autonomous but non-sovereign status of many islands and archipelagos is a matter of active choice or preference on the one hand or a result of institutional or economic inertia on the other. Furthermore, recognition of the sheer breadth of political structures and solutions within the category of non-sovereign islands has been complemented by an awareness of the limitations that even sovereign island states face in crafting and enacting effective policy in an era of multinational corporations, climate change, global markets, and global migration.

This special thematic section of *Island Studies Journal* (ISJ) seeks to add further nuance and a global perspective to the already rich body of research concerning the gaps and overlaps between different varieties of island sovereignty and non-sovereignty. How can we legitimately compare, for example, the long-established autonomous political systems in the United Kingdom’s Crown Dependencies with autonomous political systems that arose out of island decolonisation processes? What differences are there in practice between the exercise of sovereign and non-sovereign power in island territories that often combine small populations with small land areas? Are defence capabilities, economic self-sufficiency, and/or the ability to engage in international relations necessary attributes of true sovereignty? If so, how should we assess the jurisdictional status of island states that lack these qualities or the jurisdictional status of non-sovereign island territories that possess them? What are the best means by which island nations that desire statehood can achieve their goals? What solutions might there be for island or archipelago territories that are split in their political desires along ethnic or geographic lines? How do regional or supranational institutions such as the European Union affect the exercise of island decision-making power? Given the

emotional and cultural importance that the question of sovereignty or non-sovereignty holds for many island societies, might it be that the economy-centred approaches so often taken by researchers lack the impact that they once may have had? What are the everyday atmospheres of island sovereignty and non-sovereignty, and how do these play out in people's daily lives? And given how much the global political and economic system has changed in the past 30 years, since the wave of island independence largely petered out, are we even capable of assessing the economic and political situations in which new small island states would find themselves? Does it even make sense to compare the statuses and situations of such diverse territories as Tokelau, Mauritius, Fiji, the Isle of Man, Aruba, Greenland, Puerto Rico, Malta, and Jeju? Where do individual island territories in different parts of the world and with different colonial histories fit along the spectrum of sovereignty?

This special thematic section welcomes papers on these and other related themes. Authors are welcome to focus on one or more particular island territories, but in order to match the scope of the special thematic section, it is necessary for papers to place these cases in the context of wider questions regarding the meanings and importance of sovereignty and non-sovereignty on a global scale. Authors are also welcome to undertake wider comparative analyses, qualitative or quantitative in nature.

This special thematic section will be published in May 2020 in ISJ 15(1), but individual papers will be published online ahead of print as and when they complete the peer review and editorial process.

ISJ is a web-based, freely downloadable, open access, peer reviewed, electronic journal that publishes papers advancing and critiquing the study of issues affecting or involving islands. It is listed and abstracted in Scopus and Web of Science (Social Science Citations Index). For further information, or if you are interested in submitting a paper, contact ISJ executive editor Adam Grydehøj (agrydehoj@upei.ca). Manuscripts should preferably be between 5,000-8,000 words and must be written in excellent English (prepared in accordance with the ISJ submission guidelines: http://islandstudies.ca/guidelines_instructions.html).

Submissions should reach Adam Grydehøj by 31 May 2019 at the latest to be considered for this special thematic section (please use the title 'Spectrum of Island Sovereignty' as the e-mail subject).

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