

Lecture 3:

Terminology

Descent communities

- the principle of genealogical connection by which attachment to a particular ancestral group is attained
- kinship, ancestors, blood, 'own kind', brothers and sisters, father and mother – 'fatherland', 'Mother Russia', 'the children of Africa'...
- 3 English words with connotations of shared descent and culture: **race, ethny, nation**

'Race'

- the idea of 'race' as a meaningful biological category is predominantly dismissed
- race: a group defined as distinct because of its supposed common physical characteristics
- race as a social construct; race exists as a social category
- the idea of different 'races' emerged when European and non-European peoples came into contact (late 15th, early 16th century)

What is the difference between race and ethny?

- the need to distinguish between the two: **race** refers to the classification of people, it is concerned with the categorisation of 'them'; **ethnicity** refers to group identification and is more concerned with the identification of 'us' (Michael Banton *Race Relations*, 1967)
- the distinction is not necessary (T. H. Eriksen *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 1993; P. van den Berghe 'Does Race Matter?' 1995) – in both cases the social concern is with common biological descent, even when the markers are primarily cultural

Ethnic group or ethny (*ethnie*)

- from Greek *ethnos*: people, unity of people with common blood or descent (it referred to a basic human category, not a subgroup)
- *ethnikos*: referring to heathens, the 'others', foreign
- 15th century in English *ethnic* meant somebody not Hebrew, not Christian, so a pagan --> not 'us' but 'others'
- The term 'ethnicity' first appeared in English in the 1950s; it has various meanings: ethnic identity, the essence of ethny, belonging to ethny...

6 main features of ethnies:

(Hutchinson & Smith, 1996)

- common name
- myth of common ancestry (shared origin)
- shared historical memories
- elements of common culture
- homeland
- sense of solidarity

What is the difference between ethny and nation?

- nation is a self-defined rather than other-defined grouping; "a nation is a self-aware ethnic group" (W. Connor)
- ethnies are cultural communities much older than nations, on which nations are based; difference between ethnies and nations is that a delimited territory, a unified legal and economic system, and a public culture are the elements that nations have, yet ethnies lack (A. D. Smith)
- it is the political element that sets the two apart

Nation

- Latin origin, *natio* from *nasci*: to be born, conveying idea of common blood ties (yet the Romans never designated themselves as a *natio*, reserved for 'community of foreigners'), derogatory connotation; *nationem*: referring to breed or race
- late 13th century introduced into English meaning blood related group, later relating to inhabitants of a country
- medieval universities: communities of students; gradually changing the meaning of the word to a community of opinion, purpose
- ecclesiastical councils of the late Middle Ages, the word lost all derogatory connotations; becoming a synonym for 'people'
- the word 'nation' in wide use from the 18th century
- the word 'nationalism', in contrast, much more recent

Which nation?

- civic and ethnic definitions of nation:
- civic nationhood derives from free will and participation in the nation; ethnic nationhood is tied to culture, ethnicity, and based on shared territory or language, or common descent etc.
- *Volksnation* as relating to myths of common origin
- *Kulturnation* as elevating the myth of common culture (*narod*)
- *Staatsnation* as based on citizenship (*nacija*)

What is the nation?

- in contemporary writings nation is no longer regarded as unchanging and primary social entity
- every attempt to answer this unresolved question is inherently dependent on the belief that nations are real entities
- instead of regarding them as such, R. Brubaker suggests focus on 'nationness as a conceptual variable':
- "Everyone agrees that nations are historically formed constructs." (Brubaker)
- cf. sceptical view of V. Tishkov who goes even further, suggesting to forget the term 'nation'

What is the nation?

- the modernists (e.g. Gellner, Hobsbawm, Anderson) see the nation as a purely modern phenomenon; it is a product of capitalism or industrialism and bureaucracy, an outcome of modernisation
- M. Hroch is convinced that nations are real (note: not eternal) and should be defined as including: remembered common past of the group, linguistic or cultural ties enabling social communication within the group, perceived equality of all who belong to the group

Defining the nation

- definitions abound, the most fundamental conceptual divide being **objective** vs. **subjective** definitions:
- commonly listed objective markers: language, ethnicity, religion, territory, common history, shared descent (ancestry, kinship), common culture, etc.
- famous example: Stalin's definition "a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture"
- several problems with 'objective' definitions mean that scholars nowadays use objective markers in conjunction with subjective factors
- commonly cited subjective markers: solidarity, self-awareness, loyalty, collective will, etc.
- Ernest Renan, Max Weber, Walker Connor, Michael Hechter ...

Some definitions:

- Renan opted for a 'subjectivist' view of nation as "a soul, a spiritual principle"; it is "a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future"
- for Weber it is "a community of sentiment which would adequately manifest itself in a state of its own"
- Connor: "a group of people who believe they are ancestrally related"
- Hechter: "a relatively large group of genetically unrelated people with high solidarity"
- most famous: Anderson "a nation is an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign"

Next week's readings:

- Walker Connor *Ethnonationalism* pp. 90-103
- Miroslav Hroch *Social preconditions of national revival in Europe* pp. xi-xviii, 3-17
- Benedict Anderson *Imagined communities*, pp. 5-7
- Ernest Gellner *Nations and nationalism*, pp. 1-7 + 'Adam's navel...' in Mortimer & Fine *People, Nation and State* (pp. 31-35) + Smith 'The Nation: Real or Imagined?' (ibid.) (pp. 36-42)
- Eric Hobsbawm *Nations and nationalism since 1780*, pp. 8-13
- Anthony Smith *The ethnic origins of nations*, pp. 6-13, 16-18
- Michael Hechter *Containing nationalism* pp. 5-9
- Craig Calhoun *Nationalism* pp. 1-8
- Montserrat Guibernau *Nationalisms* pp. 46-51
- Rogers Brubaker *Nationalism reframed* pp. 13-16