Andrey Golikov   WHS Introduction & Coaching
Bahar Madvi Sabet   Dr. Miriam Trzeciak & Ekta Chauhan
Niloofar Soleymani   Jan 5,2021
Mahyar Meraji Masouleh Moghaddam
Mahmoud Nacer Blel

Benedict Anderson

Anglo-Irish political scientist and historian
-Graduated from the University of Cambridge (B.A. in classics, 1957)
-Awarded a Ph.D. in government by Cornell University in 1967
-Taught in the department of government at Cornell University
-In 1983 the publication of "Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism" established Anderson's reputation as one of the foremost thinkers on nationalism.

Stuart Hall

Marxist Sociologist,Cultural Theorist and Political Activist
-Director of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies
-Professor of Sociology at the Open University
-President of the British Sociological Association
-He was the first editor of New Left Review, a founding editor of the journal soundings and authors of many articles and books on politics and culture including Policing the Crisis and 'The Great Moving Right Show' (for Marxism Today), in which he famously coined the term 'Thatcherism'.

Imagined Communities

To begin with, we have to take a look at what we mean by "nation."

In Benedict Anderson's book Imagined Communities, Benedict Anderson poses the following questions:

- What exactly is a nation?
- Why does the academic community struggle so much to define what "nation" means?
- How do people come to identify with a particular nation?
- Why is that national identity so strong that people are willing to kill and die for it? (Anderson, 2006,pp 122-124)

In his book, he said that nations are social constructs. He called them "imagined political communities" that are imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign:

- Imagined because : The members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.
- Limited because : Even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations.
- Sovereign because : Separation of church and state; imagined as a centralized, independent government. The concept was born in an age in which enlightenment and revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm.
- Community because : " regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. (Anderson, 2006,pp 124-125)

Stuart Hall, in his article, suggests the approach to comprehension of heritage as an essential element of nation-building. He understands this phenomenon through the prism of B. Anderson's theory of "imagined community," which allows him to indicate the "on-going" nature of "nation" and thus the dynamic role of heritage. Also, his conception of representation gives him an opportunity to talk about heritage in two ways: as proof for the metanarrative and as its product. (Hall, 1999)

Furthermore, Hall noted that democratization and the crisis of the "universal knowledge" idea open up new ways to restructure modern "imaginary communities" like nation. Thus, Hall uses the concept of "imagined community" and tries to realize it to Britain's reality. (Hall, 1999)

Further Questions :

1 - Have you ever experienced the sense of "imagined community" for a particular heritage site?
2 - Do you think an imagined community helps individuals have a better sense of belonging to a group? or is it an illusion created by the governments and used as a tool to have a better control over the masses?
3 - How would you feel about a borderless world?

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Examples of "Imagined Communities"

Religion plays a major role in forming a group identity in individuals minds, through shared practices, beliefs, scripts and language.

Nations As with religion, a nation, with its finite borders, common territory, language and traditions, creates a sense of community for its citizens even though it is practically impossible for all the members of that state to meet each other.

Social Media As a relatively modern concept, having a major influence on the majority of people within a given society, social media can also be considered as an imagined community.This sense of community is created through:

- The common ground of a shared platform (Facebook, Instagram, Telegram...)
- Common friends on a given platform
- Mutual Content
- Shared Experiences