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Nationalism, modernity, museums. Inspiration by the theory of Ernst Gellner

Abstract

The study deals with the issue of nationalism and its emphasis on national identities, which have occupied a specific position in museums since the 19th century. Nationalism understands the study as a modern phenomenon, which was created by specific structural conditions, functions and changes connected with the advent of modernity. It is precisely the conditions for the emergence of nationalism that the study pays attention to, and through the analysis of Ernst Gellner's theory it seeks to define the main attributes from which the emergence and persistence of nationalism derive. To this end, the study will present the basic characteristics of a traditional society in which there were no suitable conditions for the existence of nationalism, and subsequently show how these conditions were born by the transition of society from traditional to modern. With regard to the theme of nationalism, the social change that took place and the basic characteristics of modern society, which eventually created the breeding ground for the emergence and existence of nationalism, will be presented. The study then applies the issue of nationalism to museums. The study will outline how museums have transformed in the established modern society and what role nationalism has played in them. Finally, the study briefly reflects on the role that nationalism can play in museums today, *viz*. it will show which elements constructing national identity can potentially appear most in museums.

Key words: National identity, nationalism, modern society, museum, critical museum studies, Gellner

Introduction

In my discussions with colleagues, friends, relatives, while watching TV debates, or thinking about reading professional texts and publications, I constantly encounter a different concept of the perception of the position of

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national identity in our lives. Some people see national identity as an essential, self-evident part of our personality[2], and national culture as a valuable and, to some extent, decisive part of our daily lives. Culture is important to society, it is a historically and geographically determined socio-cultural context that affects the shape of society and its members. The culture of a given society is connected with the process of socialization, which influences the life form of the given society, because it participates in shaping the opinion and value orientation of the members of society, their habits, framework of the thinking process, adopted models of behavior etc. The culture of a given society need not necessarily be national. Culture has taken on the national dimension as a pivotal dimension in modern society and has maintained it to this day. The fact that the national dimension of cultures is still present in social discourse is evidenced not only by the emerging social problems and crises that are solved on the scale of national and transnational rhetoric, but also by museum institutions. Many museums all over the world still bear the designation „national museum“ and many of their collections and exhibitions focus on exploring, preserving and presenting national cultures, traditions, history, etc.

On the other hand, there are the voices of people pointing out that national identity is losing its original meaning due to an ever-globalizing society and is no longer a determining factor for its existence today. According to these opinions, the power of national identity is disappearing along with the weakening and disappearing phenomenon of nationalism, which, according to some in the globalized world, becomes an anachronism, an almost dead concept. However, the issue is not that simple. The continuing existence of nationalism is evidenced by the new national waves that some individuals or groups appear in, for example, at a time known as the time of the migration crisis. However, not only examples from areas where the phenomenon of nationalism has escalated to extremes and taken on a significant negative dimension with which this term is essential in the postmodern society are an example.[3] The fact

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[2] I do not mean here today, at least in scientific discourse, the surviving primordialist conception of the nation, which is perceived by primordialists as an agelong entity that has always been present in human society, and if it has ever been visibly absent, the only reason was it was just "asleep". What I mean is the perception of national identity as one of the important dimensions of contemporary human identity. In the context of the Czech Republic, according to the results of the International Social Survey Program 2013 – National Identity III (in Vlachová 2015), is the seventh most important group identity for Czechs. As the most important group identity, respondents reported employee identity, then family identity and age identity.

[3] But it is good to realize that in the past nationalism had not only a negative but also a positive function. Its positive point was that it became a new link in a society that

that the national dimension of culture and identity is still of importance to people is evidenced by the high attendance at cultural events held during major national holidays, anniversaries and other events.

To label nationalism as an anachronism that will disappear in the foreseeable future and, with its disappearance, will totally weaken national identities would be naive and simplistic. At the same time, however, we should realize that the form and parable of nationalism has changed since this phenomenon began. Nationalism, which largely affects the form of national identity, is not a static phenomenon. Similarly, there are no static institutions – including museums that work somehow with the national dimension of cultures. If we want to consider how museums cope with nationalism, it is appropriate to consider not only the historical context of the relationship between museums and nationalism, but it is important to address the genesis of this phenomenon in general. Only in the context of the origin and subsequent development of nationalism can we understand its position in society and in the contemporary museum. It is precisely the context of the genesis of nationalism that the present study will introduce and then incorporate into the context of the museum environment. The aim of the study is to present nationalism as a modern phenomenon, which has its origin in structural and functionalist changes of the changing modern society. Ernst Gellner's theory, which offers a sociological explanation of the origin of nationalism in the context of Central Europe, will be used to introduce this issue. The study will also show how emerging nationalism has merged with museum institutions and reflects on their relationships today. In view of these goals, the study will first address the presentation of nationalism as a phenomenon that has its origins in modern society, which has undergone a fundamental change in the transition from traditional to modern. The connection between nationalism and museums, which began in the 19th century, in which national museums with their specific national interests began for the first time, will then be introduced. The relationship of museums to the nation and national identities is still evident to this day, but its appearance has changed. The study will reflect on this topic in the last passage, which briefly outlines which elements related to national

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was threatened by anomie. Nationalism created a sense of solidarity among people who, after the urbanization process, found themselves in the anonymous society of strangers. But nationalism was also related to the problems that society faced during both world wars, we have seen a variety of "ethnic cleansing" (mass murdering of people and ethnic groups - whether Jews or ethnic groups in the former Yugoslavia, and so on).

identity may appear in museums (but also in mass media, schools and other institutions).

Nationalism as a fundamentally modern phenomenon in the conception of E. Gellner

Ernst Gellner, a sociologist and social anthropologist of Czech descent, has addressed nationalism as a modern phenomenon. Gellner's research interest has focused primarily on the issue of nationalism in the context of the emergence and development of modern industrial societies. He was interested in a question how it was possible for modernity to emerge and take root in society, and what the consequences of this social change were. Linked to this is his interest in nationalism, which modernity has given the breeding ground. Gellner's sociological optics of perception of the phenomenon of nationalism is beneficial for the presentation of the issue. The origins and evolution of nationalism Gellner does not describe circumstantially, but carefully examines its historical evolution. In his works, Gellner offers a scientific discourse on nationalism, which is firmly anchored in structural causes and functions. He sees the birth of nationalism in the structural-functionalist changes that society underwent during modernization. Nationalism is a consequence of these social changes, not a phenomenon that would be deeply rooted in the human psyche itself. I find the structural-functionalist approach for the study of nationalism to be sociologically relevant and beneficial for understanding the whole issue, since it is scientifically devoid of the emotional description that many other authors come up with and offers a sociologically neutral description of the phenomenon.

Gellener also realizes that nationalism did not evolve everywhere equally quickly, did not start to form everywhere at the same time, did not always have the same course of origin and even somewhere did not have to start to develop and apply at all. It therefore reflects the specific conditions of individual areas and records them in its analysis. By its conception Gellner belongs to the modernist conception of the nation, which understands the nation as a certain unintended product of modern society and the structural changes brought by modernity. In view of the revolutionary social and structural changes that took place in Europe at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, the authors of this paradigm, in agreement with Gellner, see it as a European construct that has gradually spread from Western and Central Europe to other parts of the world (Kubisova 2013).

The transformation of society and the emergence of nationalism (from traditional to modern and beyond)

Traditional (agricultural) society

According to Glellner (1993: 17), nations are not automatically a given, natural social necessity. According to him, nations gave rise to nationalism, which was the source of the need to classify people on the basis of belonging to a nation. The nations, as we know them today, did not exist in traditional society, because there were no suitable structural-functionalist conditions for them. The traditional society was a Malthusian society (Gellner 1993, 2001). It was characterized by faster population growth than resource growth, which was constrained by scarce resources and high technology. Therefore, there were a large number of people who were potentially always at risk of famine and poor living conditions. The growth of the population also influenced the social organization and especially the emergence of a complex division of labor. The creation of a specialized ruling class and a specialized priesthood was important. In traditional times, unlike the pre-agrarian period, states often existed, and Gellner (2001: 131–133) assumes that most agrarian states were authoritarian, because with the possibility of storing food and wealth there was also a need to oversee their protection and redistribution and so power became a necessary part of social order.

The traditional society was **organized hierarchically** (cf. Gellner 1993, 2001, 2003). The ruling class, which held education, wealth and a monopoly on coercion, constituted a numerical minority of the population against the poor and the uneducated majority. It was not an egalitarian society. People were firmly bound to their social positions and roles into which they were born, *viz.* related to their inclusion in a particular social layer. The social status automatically defined the individual's destiny – his access to resources, rights, prestige, power, etc. It is not surprising, therefore, that their positions and the associated privileges were guarded by people and did not allow any of the lower classes to upper classes. **People's social mobility was therefore severely limited.** The man who was born by a farmer remained a farmer throughout his life and expected nothing else. **Physical mobility was also limited**. Farmers as the peasants were attached to the land of their master, etc.

It is also important that this society was internally culturally differentiated. Different social classes and positions carried a specific

culture, the difference of which was emphasized and strengthened. The main function of culture in traditional society was to "*strengthen, confirm, raise the profile and make the hierarchical status system clear*" (Gellner 2003: 36). And if culture has such an objective, logically it cannot be an instrument for determining the territorial borders of individual communities, and therefore this period usually did not create the appropriate ground for the formation of nationalism, which bases borders on cultural (national) differences. What is important to realize as a specific characteristic of traditional society is that "in the agricultural world, cultural similarity is not a political bond and political associations do not require cultural similarity" (Gellner 2003: 40). The dominant identity here was not a national identity, but a status identity, which often included elements of devotion to the king; in the Habsburg monarchy it was a respect for the emperor.

Modern (industrial) society

According to Gellner (1993, 2003), the main condition for the establishment of modern society was the birth of industrialism in the 18th century. The advent of modernity brought a lifestyle change that affected all sections of the population. Thanks to industrial mass production, modern society no longer had to rely only on traditional stable technologies, but began to focus on economic and scientific growth, which began to develop faster than population growth. There was an overall acceleration in the areas of industry, manufacturing and science, as well as in the field of information dissemination and related communication changes. People adopted a modern approach to the lifestyle, characterized by their orientation towards their future welfare (which was linked to a departure from the past and generational continuity).[4] One should not simply passively expect the future, but

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[4] According to Koselleck (2004), the function of history was perceived as a teacher of life until the 18th century; history was a reservoir of experience. This perception was made possible by the persistence of living conditions in which the events experienced were similar for many people, and it was therefore assumed that all people could draw on the same basis of experience. This concept changed with the advent of modernity, which, according to Koselleck (2004: 9–25), culminated in the French Revolution. Time accelerated in the 18th century, something new was constantly coming, and past experience was deprived of its former stability. Traditional experience was rejected, it could no longer be a source of constantly new and rapidly changing situations. Future-oriented expectations became preferable to experience. Turning to the future also influenced the formation of the human identity, which now focused on the future and therefore on what

actively shape it. According to Gellner (1993: 33), modern society is „the only society ever living in conditions of steady growth, relying on it and for expected and continual improvement."[5] According to Gellner (2001: 127–128) it was not only due to the economic boom, but also to the notion that history has a generally upward trend, along with the contemporaneous discoveries of biology and the popularity gained by Darwinism.

Economic growth and permanent changes of the society are inextricably linked to **social and physical mobility**, which has become possible, easier (development of roads and means of transport, railways, cars, and subsequently aircraft), and often necessary in modern society. The social position of man has lost its former stable structure. You could now gain improvement, using one's efforts to gain adavancement to a better social class. Social roles became more optional, and the position of man began to depend on his profession rather than his gender. Professions gradually lost their stability and professional foundation. Rather than belonging to a caste or condition, talent and skills became important in choosing jobs and employees. This brought with it the gradual expansion of the idea of equality of people and thus the possibility of pursuing a profession outside one's former class. The gradual spread of the ideal of equality was also influenced by the Protestant character of religion, within which the status of all believers was equalized – no one should have privileged access to the sacred anymore. The moral imperative was no longer to be proclaimed by a single religious authority, but to be internalized by every person who is responsible for his or her own behavior and therefore should know and read the Scripture itself (ie access to faith should no longer be conveyed by someone else).

The modern man no longer necessarily lived only in those social groups to which he was born and to whom he had to be a member with regard to his gender status. He started to choose associations and institutions of which he would either be a member or would leave. This

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it wants and where it is heading. The horizon of human expectations is culturally coded, because one's own culture places limits on what people can experience. Experience areas are culturally limited.

[5] In contemporary postmodern society, the typically modern ideal of progress and the golden future has proved unrealistic. Modernity and its technologies have contributed to the emergence of a number of postmodern problems that contemporary society is facing as unintended consequences of modernity. According to Beck (2004), these are typically environmental conflicts, the threat of terrorism at the global level, or global financial crises.

has resulted in „modular man associations being efficient and not rigid"
(Gellner 1997: 88). And thanks to this, civil society could be created,
according to Gellner. At the same time, he ceased to be as tied to the
place as before. It resulted in the transformation of the labor market,
where many new jobs in agriculture were lost due to new technologies
and people started moving to new cities. According to Gellner (2003:
42), „we are not mobile because we are egalitarians, we are egalitarians
because we are mobile." Egalitarianism is a tool that makes life easier
for individuals on the social ladder and migrants within space.

Modern society is associated with high culture

According to Gellner (2001, p. 96), modern „is inherently such
a society where high culture becomes a culture at all, a culture of the
whole community." Where „high is such a culture that depends on
normative texts and is transmitted by formal education. Its opposite is
the low or folk culture transmitted by word of mouth or behavior and
associated with norms embodied in rituals rather than scripture" (ibid.).
And it is just the modernity, with its structures, in which high culture
becomes, for the first time, „a pervasive and operational culture of
society as a whole, no longer a privileged culture and a sign of a limited
social class" (Gellner 1997: 94). High culture in modernity became
unified, universal, i.e. universal and inherent to all inhabitants of
a particular (national) state. People in the same nation state use the same
standard language and have the same communication code and share the
same basic customs, values, norms and ideas. The nation became a basic
self-identification tool and thus filled instead of loose traditional
identities, which were weakened due to the disintegration of indigenous
communities and their strong ties in modernity. According to Gellner
(1987: 6–19), a typical feature of modern society (nation) is the
anonymity of its members. People of one nation identify with national
collectivity without knowing each other's individual members or
subgroups. This distinguishes modern society from traditional society in
which the individual was tied to his local community with which he
identified himself and whose members he knew. The individual was tied
not only to relationships between members of the community, but also to
the local culture. Individual folk cultures were suppressed by the
assertion of a dominant and unified national culture, which by its very
nature is a high culture and therefore a culture based on the general
literacy of the population.

The blooming of high culture was made possible by the expanding and universalizing literacy and scripture – in modern society, everyone was able to read. The bureaucratic nature of modern society and the predominant semantic nature of work were related to the need for the modern man to be able to read. Unlike in the past, it was not based on physical strength but on thought work and anonymous communication, which requires the ability to understand context-free messages. It is easier to transmit context-free messages within one communication code and therefore within one culture and one language. Knowledge of high culture and national language thus became a necessary condition of existence for modern man. It enabled him to understand communication with other people, which in modernity was often impersonal and context-free. This is one of the reasons why the ability to read and write started to be required of people and, consequently, to be gradually made available by general basic education. General primary education was subsequently reflected in the above-mentioned ideal of equality, which appeared in modernity. According to Gellner (1987: 102), it generalizes and unifies people, produces people with the same level of education and remarkably similar to each other. Young people who have undergone general education and are as well educated as the surrounding majority (no longer as the formerly educated elite) can no longer easily be instilled with a deep sense of inequality.

General literacy gradually became a general feature, demand and value of modern society. According to Gellner (1993: 44–45), modern society was exo-educational, which means that people are educated not at local community level, as they were before, but by specialists in a centralized general education which is run by the state. As part of the education system, the school, through the help of specialists, hands over the required repository of concepts, knowledge and literacy to be shared by all so that pupils can subsequently succeed in their jobs and citizenship. At the same time, school education became a useful normative tool. School education contributed to the dissemination of cultural norms and requirements and thus to the promotion and acceptance of national attitudes and identities.

„The demand for exo-socialization is the key to why the state and culture has to be united now, while in the past their union was weak, random, changeable, loose and often insignificant. It is now inevitable" (Gellner 1993: 49). It is this demand and pressure for homogeneity and a unified high culture that created a space in which nationalism was able to develop fully and thus respond to emerging societal demands. As Gellner (1993: 56–57) states, „it is not that nationalism imposes

homogeneity from the arbitrary need for power; it is an objective need for homogeneity that is reflected in nationalism". Nationalism was a response to a new form of social organization, a response to changing structural-functional conditions, new social demands and social practice, to changes that took place in emerging modernity. The difference between pre-industrial and industrial societies is that the traditional hierarchical society promoted cultural differentiation in an effort to preserve the status of people that remained fixed throughout life. While industrial society is socially mobile, people choose their roles, their status is no longer fixed. In more recent times, however, modern society began to emphasize cultural features and differences across the national community. The same high culture became a political bond in modern society. According to Gellner (1993: 23), „it is a pre-industrial society characterized by horizontal differentiation within society, while industrial society strengthens the boundaries between nations rather than the boundaries between classes."

Origin and course of development of nationalism in the context of Central Europe

In his analysis, Gellner (2003: 53) often focused on the Central European region, which, according to him, is unique that „this geopolitical area truly historically starts from an almost ideally pure non-national political system and ends with an ideally pure national political system. The political organization of Central and Eastern Europe was originally based on dynasties, religions, and territorial institutions, not primarily on language and the culture associated with it." Today, however, we find here the nation-states created in various ways.

The process of forming nation-states in Europe, as described by Gellner (2003: 54–75), began after the Napoleonic wars, but the nationalist perspective did not yet posess sufficient weight. Peace negotiations in Vienna in 1815 began to create a new map of Europe, reflecting dynastic, religious and power interests, not ethnic and linguistic factors. This created a bureaucratically administered area divided between the Habsburgs, Romanov and Ottoman Sultans. However, the progressive modernization of society had transformed people's lives, and the emerging nationalism caused an inherent instability within the defined settlement in Vienna. Increasing levels of bureaucracy began to emphasize the existence of one official language. Language gradually became more important to people than before, as the

language they spoke began to influence the shape of their opportunities in life (eg teaching at universities in German, etc.). Gradually, this part of the world went to the stage of the age of irredentism in the spirit of the boom of nationalism and the first nationalist-style uprisings. At the beginning of the 20th century, nationalism became an obvious vision of most Europeans. In 1918, a key element of political legitimacy was built on nationalism. The post-war organization of Europe after the First World War opened a third stage, in which national principles referring to the right of self-determination of all nations were already routinely applied. Their application in border construction was neither easy nor possible everywhere. Especially in areas where geographical, demographic and historical principles were in conflict with each other, there was no way to apply the nationalist principles without causing harm to them. What was also decisive for the division of the world was who was on the side of the winners during the war, and geopolitical coincidence also played a role. After the Treaty of Versailles, the emerging states did not fulfill the national principle, they were often non-national, unstable and weak. These phenomena then led to problems occurring in the fourth stage, which in many places intertwined with ethnic cleansing. The period of World War II was marked by nationalism, racism, migration, warfare, but also mass murder and other war crimes.

In addition to the time horizon, the geographical aspect was also important. The nationalist principle calls for a consensus between culture and the state. In some territories, the culture and the nation state were merged in a gradual and peaceful way, where the inhabitants gradually forgot about differences of their cultural origin (this is an example of ancient dynastic states in which the dominant culture was connected with the territory long before the emergence of nationalism, e.g. parts of France, London). There were also areas (the territory of the former Holy Roman Empire, today's region of Germany or Italy), in which there were a high culture and language used for writing for a long time, but these areas were not covered by one state, the territories were politically fragmented. By the time of the boom of nationalism, there already existed a developed national culture, and the aim of the nationalists was to create corresponding national states (Prussia, later the Weimar Republic) with respect to these cultures, which did not have to be ethnically displaced or purged. Problems began to emerge in Eastern Europe, in which there were neither nation states nor national cultures (except Poland, which had a high culture,according to Gellner). Both had to be redeveloped using political and cultural engineering. Especially in the case of newly emerging nation states, the homogeneity of the

population was established by violent form, which in some cases culminated in forced migration and the abovementioned ethnic cleansing (example of Yugoslavia, the Balkans). (Gellner 2003)

Czech nationalism is placed by Gellner (2003) on the border of the middle of the scale, where on one side there are strong dynastic states that were characterized by high culture in the past to a certain extent corresponding to the geographical environment in which the political group members lived. On the other side of the scale, there are groups characterized by the absence of a common high culture and state. The territory of today's Czech Republic in the Middle Ages and in the early modern era was an important political entity associated with Czech high culture, in which the written form of language was applied. In the seventeenth century, however, the former Czech kingdom disappeared within the Habsburg Empire. The Czech language lost its former political ties, ceased to be a bearer of high culture and became part of the life of the rural society. This situation changed after the industrial revolution, which brought many peasants to the cities due to the change of working conditions. According to Gellner (2003: 120), „people who spoke Czech and made up the majority in Bohemia and Moravia gradually returned to cities as well as returned their original role to their language.“ While building the Czech identity and trying to strengthen its position of power and significance the Czech revivalists could benefit from the historical events and consequences (a reference to the Czech Kingdom and Charles University, or the proto-Protestant Hussite movement were mostly common).

According to Gellner (2003, 1993), the last stage of nationalism is the stage of weakening national feelings, which shows the gradual convergence of cultures in a globalizing society. This cultural rapprochement is most evident in Western and partly also in Central Europe and essentially corresponds to the further formation and transformation of the phenomenon of nationalism. The concept of postmodern society does not appear in the Gellner model of the three phases of human development. The explanation is simple, Gellner himself (2001: 13) understands industrial society as a broad term that includes the society of late modernity, which is discussed by other scientists, and which Gellner rather replaces with the term „fully developed industrial society“ and is then placed into the third stage – the industrial phase of human history. It is aware of the transformation of today's society (e.g. the shift of emphasis from production to consumption itself) as well as increasing levels of international dependence, cooperation and communication (see e.g. international trade

and the international labor market) and the possibility to move not only within one's home state but beyond (migration). It is possible to observe a certain convergence of cultures, but according to Gellner their total unification cannot be expected. „Although it is unlikely that all of the old folk cultures will survive – except symbolically and in cellophane packaging – the international abundance of fairly different high cultures will no doubt (fortunately) remain with us" (Gellner 1993: 132–133). Nor did Gellner suppose that there would be a real situation in which all high cultures would be covered by one shared political authority. „With a very high probability, the differences between cultural ways of life and communication despite the similarity of the economic base, will remain large enough to require special treatment and therefore different cultural and political units" (Gellner 1993: 130). At the same time, people will still be dependent on these states and their cultures in search of work, education, etc., so that the emphasis will still be on cultural standardization within a state whose borders will continue to correspond to those of culture. Gellner neither anticipated a situation of complete homogenization of all national cultures into one mass, nor did he expect that nationalism would disappear completely in the near future. He rather anticipated some possibility of its transformation. In the words of Gellner (1993: 134): „one cannot expect the end of the age of nationalism. But it can be expected that the edge of national encounters will slowly diminish." Gellner expresses the belief that future nationalism within developed industrial societies could be at least partially free from the potential pathological consequences that society has encountered in the past.

National identity and museums: The establishment of national museums and identity-building role of museums

The museum phenomenon has a long tradition, and as an important part of society and its culture we can find it in many periods of time and in many areas. Its roots are in collecting, which, according to Holman (2010), is based on the ancient need of mankind to collect objects for survival, which has been preserved in a modified form of entertainment and education to the present day. The collection, preservation and presentation of the collection items, however, changed and developed in individual stages, as did the museum institution itself. The origin of the museum as a specific institution based on museum work dates back to the 18th century. At that time, the nature of collecting and museum

activity was also changing. The former collections were usually intended only for private purposes, which was connected with the fact that mainly aristocratic cabinet collections were developed. Their goals were symbolic rather than aesthetic or educational, since the cabinets were to present the social position of the nobility. The opening of museums to the wider public began only with the gradual democratization of museums from the second half of the 17th century. More significant development of museums, however, cannot really be noticed until the eighteenth century. In it, the Enlightenment's vision of reason put the service of science and knowledge at the center of collecting interest, and thus the education of the broader population, not just the nobility. Therefore, a new emphasis was placed on the accessibility of collections, which increased even further after the French Revolution. From then, the era of mass founding of museums began in the modern sense. This is evidenced by the emergence of a number of world-famous museums. (cf. Jůva 2004; Jagošová, Jůva, Mrázová 2010; Holman 2014)

In modern society, museums became places associated with national ideology. Museums as social institutions were not immune to ideologies. In times of world wars, museums often came to the forefront of the goals of totalitarian ideologies, and museums were a space for their presentation and related education. At the same time, nationalism, expanding in modernity as a form of political and group identity, influenced the nature of museums in several ways. The national movements initiated the establishment of a number of national and regional museums, which focused not only on building a national image, but also on strengthening national feelings and education. Not only natural and technical museums but also cultural-historical, ethnographic, ethnological and archaeological museums developed. The biggest boom was recorded in the regional museums. The first world exhibitions became an important event and a social phenomenon. These started the first world exhibition in London in 1851. The beginning of the expansion of world exhibitions was closely related to the formation of nation states whose national culture and technical and scientific achievements were to present the world to the world (cf. Šobáňová 2012; Jagošová, Jůva, Mrázová 2010).

National identity is still an important part of today's (not only) national museums. Museums are not only recreational agents, but they are also educational agents where visitors learn in an informal way. In addition, the museum may also be a place where visitors learn not only information but also identities. Museums are not ideologically neutral places, instead they are formed with certain political and economic goals

(Murawska-Muthesius, Piotrowski 2015). According to critical museum studies and according to other important authors dealing with the issue of nationalism such as Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm (in Rivera-Orraca 2009) museums are cultural institutions related to the structures of national identities and, in general, to the structure of historical national discourse. Museums facilitate the understanding of symbols, past events and social order, thus enhancing the sense of collective identity, collective memory and social cohesion.

Since the end of the 19th century, and more significantly in the following centuries, museums have been gradually described by social scientists as places of power full of elitism and patriarchy, criticized for being instruments of imperialism and colonialism. Discussions began on how museums should present their collections, use their cultural authority and aura, how they should approach contemporary, often controversial topics, and so on. There was a demand for museums to be transformed into critical museums. Thus, museums that are self-critical and highly critical of the established homogeneity, resistant towards possible political pressures and ideologies that favor dialogue and debate over uniformity active in the public sphere, cooperate with local communities and take into account the changes taking place in the contemporary world. The question remains, however, who will (or who has) to evaluate this critical role of the museum and whether again there will not be a power machine, i.e. whether the critical museum is a realistic conception. (Murawska-Muthesius, Piotrowski 2015).

Critical museum studies demand that museums be a place that supports the viewer's activity, not its passivity and submission to the authority of the museum and its interpretation. As such, they are related to constructivist theories of learning,[6] which focus on the second level of museum presentation. That is, the fact that one does not take away just what the museum is trying to present. The artifacts and narratives presented are perceived by man in his own way, in his own cognitive frameworks.

As Gombrich, the well-known theoretician and art historian (in Mikš 2008: 44), pointed out in the context of art museums and the interpretation of works of art: „The meaning of art is not made up by the painter but also by the viewer who is looking at his painting.“ According to him, the meaning of a picture depends not only on its own message or on efforts and goals of its author but also on the viewer itself – I mean

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[6] See more in the author's study Constructivist learning theories and their application in the educational reality of a museum (Kolaříková 2018).

that it depends on his previous experience and knowledge, attitudes, current condition and concentration etc. Depending on the characteristics and experience of the spectator (or visitor of the museum) and also due to the socio-cultural context in which he/she lives, one deduces the meaning of images but also other parts of the museum exhibition – museum objects, narratives etc.

Of course, this applies not only to paintings, but also to other exhibits and presented narratives. So when we are thinking about the effects of expositions we must always take into account this contextuality of learning process on which constructivist theories of learning are focused. The contextuality of learning and interpretations of museum objects thus make possible the setting of ideological or power goals. From this point of view learning in the museum (and also learning about our identities) is not only about what the museum wants to teach their visitors, but about what meanings visitors will understand from the expositions and which information and attitudes they will integrate into their experience. The visitor interprets the presented data to make sense to him, a process based not only on his abilities and skills, but on his knowledge and experience, which are socially and culturally determined (comp. Hein 1999 and 2001).

Elements of national identity, which may occur in museums

It is useful to use not only Gellner's modernist conception, but also the ethnosymbolistic paradigm presented by authors such as Smith and Hroch to reflect on what elements play an important role in the process of constructing national identities. **Ethnosymbolists** agree with modernists that nations are not invariant and always existent types of human communities, and that the approach of modern society has played a key role in the process of forming nations. However, they draw attention to the fact that many modern nations were built on pre-existing ethnic ties and previous types of cultural and political communities, many of which, despite being transformed in modernity, have survived (cf. Kubišová 2013; Hroch 2009).

National history and national myths have always played an important role in shaping national identity, giving the community a sense of continuity, not only explaining its existence, but also legitimizing it. Collectively shared historical memory, according to Smith (in Kubišová 2013; comp. Smith 2009; Hroch 2009), contains mainly myths of common origin, myths of liberation and myths of choice, ideas of

common destiny, memories of heroic deeds and significant events linked to the memories of the golden age of the national community, and the narration of prominent personalities after which the current members of the group inherited the „common blood".

Collective identity is further shaped by characteristic cultural features of groups, including specific values, norms, canonical texts, symbols and sacred objects, food, dressing, emblems, etc. Shared traditions, festive feasts, rituals and other specific activities play an important role. The language spoken by the members of the group is also not negligible and usually differs from other groups. (cf. Kubišová 2013; Smith 2009; Hroch 2009)

Another category of elements involved in the process of forming national identity consists of national stereotypes, with the help of which members of the nation create categorization and typing of themselves (autostereotypes) and the surrounding world (heterostereotypes). This is also related to the naming of national communities, which leads to the self-definition of the group and at the same time to differentiate itself from other groups. (comp. Hroch 2009; Smith 2009)

Another important element is the description and specification of a nation's territory, such as its landscape, whose form is closely assmilated in historical myths and memories (Smith 2009), or the borders of a nation state. According to Gellner (2003), nationalism is linked to the notion that the state is a universal human institution that delimits a national group from other foreign groups, headed by nationals and all its members share the same national culture. In addition to its territory, the nation-state is also linked to a system of standardized laws and state symbols which, according to Hroch (2009: 238), helped „spread national identity and inspire people in the nation at the time of nation building." They made it possible to represent the nation in the countryside and to strengthen citizens' confidence in the state.

The above-described elements involved in the construction of national identity can still be found in museums to this day. We can see it on the example of the oldest museum in the Czech Republic, the Silesian Museum in Opava. The name of the permanent exhibition here is Encyclopedia of Silesia. The exposition is concentrated on the identity of the Silesian region. But elements of national identity can be found there too. The exposition was opened in 2012 and underwent a partial revision in 2018. The exposition is not chronologically classified, but is divided into several key headings (or headlines or concepts), which are sorted alphabetically, and is recorded in the encyclopedias. The aim of this method of structured exposition is (according to the historical museum)

to break the classical narrative, to rebel against the classic linear story of Czech history and to show the phenomenon of the region and the different historical periods rather selectively. This modern approach to the museum emphasizes that museums should be a place for dialogue rather than places that present any strictly given narratives. On the other hand, in practice it appears that for some visitors the current concept of the exposition is not very clear and it is difficult for them to orientate in the exposition structure and its message.

As for the elements constructing Czech identity, there are several of them. The exposition is often connected with Czech landscape – nature, animals, the exposition mentioned several times the Czech countryside and its traditional trade, we can find here the costumes or model of traditional village house (timber houses). We also find references to certain historical stages (for example the First Republic), but also to periods known as the Dark Ages – for example, after the defeat of the Battle of „White Mountain" (1620). That period derives its name from the book called „Darkness" from the well-known Czech author Jirásek. Another artist whose work is exhibited is the writer Petr Bezruč, whose work focuses on the area of miners' lives in these area in the past. However, we can also find here other personalities important not only for the region and other links to past events and traditional way of life (traditional crafts and customs).

Conclusion

The study is based on a modernist paradigm that tackles the issue of national identities as a product of nationalism[7] that was born in modern society through the transformation of social structures and functions. These were created by the transformation of society into industrial society, where not only the spreading industrialism but also other elements of modernity brought about a change in people's lives. Understanding the process of nationalism's genesis is important for further work with this concept. If we ask what role national identities play in the modern museum environment, we cannot avoid the topic of nationalism or its former function in the museum. Museums, as institutions that gained their fame just at the time of building of the

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[7] This perception of the theme is typical of Gellner, who ranks the emergence of national identity just after the time of nationalism. Other modernists may compose the birth chronology of awareness of national identities differently.

nations and nation states, gained a distinct national dimension in the 18th and subsequently in the 19th century. The concepts of museums were filled of national ideology and building plans. Although the nature of contemporary museums has changed as well as the form of nationalism, national identities still remain a visible part of not only national museums.

The study showed how concrete structures and social functions contributed to the rise, strengthening and spreading of nationalism and its national identities. These structures and functions are interconnected. It is important to realize the mutual interaction of individual structures and their transformation into modernity for further understanding nationalism not only as a fundamentally modern phenomenon, but above all as a phenomenon that is structurally conditioned and grounded. In describing the structural causes of the transformation of society and the birth of nationalism, the study was based on Ernst Gellner, who analyzed and described these structures in his extensive work.

In the process of the creation and existence of nationalism in Europe, an important role was played by the typically modern vision of continuous progress and prosperity, which was partly due to the constant change that has become part of the life of modern man. Members of modern society are involved not only in technical and scientific advancement, but also in mobility, which appears to be a necessity in a newly changing and innovative society. Workers in modernity must be able to adapt to the constant changes in the field, which is now more semantic than it used to be and moreover is specifically divided among individual people according to specific types of activities and functions. For the modern man this means he has to educate, move or change his profession. For this reason, all people have to control the same communication code that enables them to understand the communication (and thus the potentially quick learning to work), which in modern times becomes anonymous and context-free communication. As mobility is not only spatial, but also social. The position of man within the social structure is no longer determined by his birth, but by his abilities, skills, knowledge, and education, which has become a necessity in a society with variable employment. The movements of labour force has thus emphasized the need for a universal high culture (which includes a single communication code), whose response is precisely nationalism, which itself promotes the homogeneity of culture.

General education, implemented by the state, contributes to the homogenization of culture. The state participates not only in the dissemination of general literacy and education, but also in national

education and dissemination of national values. Bureaucratization, which helps the state to integrate people into a common high culture that it relies on and speaks in, contributes to the homogenization of high culture. High culture, characterizing a particular nation, becomes an identifier of the group "we", which differs from foreign groups, i.e. nations with different high culture and at the same time with different space that these groups inhabit. In modern society, therefore, the idea prevailed that the inhabitants of the same nation should share not only the same culture, but also the same territory, the nation-state. This is also the reason why nationalism has spread more easily just where the state was perceived as a self-evident unit of social organization. Mobility, which is a typical feature of modernity, does not only stem from the specific division of labor, the need for universal literacy and high culture, but also from the tendencies towards egalitarianism, in which the Protestant spirit of religion and gradual secularization also contribute. Generally educated people are gradually becoming equal in modern high culture – at least in the same nation. Within a nation and nation state, which is beginning to form and perceive as a main tool involved in the creation of national identities of people and their categorization due to the spread of nationalism.

The study was intended to help better understand that nationalism is not a random phenomenon, but a structural phenomenon which, while bringing a number of negative phenomena, such as ethnic cleansing and hostility among nations, also played a positive role as a kind of glue against the anomie of the society at the time of modernity. Like social structures and functions themselves, natio-nalism is an evolving phenomenon that can change depending on the change in the structural-functional conditions on which it is based and upon which it depends. These structural-functional changes are indeed taking place today, which is evident not only in the transfor-mation of society but also in the expectations associated with the role of today's museums. Today, new demands are placed on roles of museums. Museums shouldn´t be just institutions open to the general public and to participate in social functions, but also places that support the visitor's critical thinking and are generally in the line with constructivist theories (not only) of learning. Museums are supposed to create and promote dialogue, but at the same time they have to deal with the question of how to achieve this goal at a time of still existing but partially changing national identities.

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Nacjonalizm, nowoczesność, muzea. Inspiracja teorią Ernsta Gellnera

Streszczenie

Artykuł podejmuje zagadnienie nacjonalizmu, jego wpływu na tożsamość narodową oraz specyficznego miejsca, jakie nacjonalizm zajmuje w muzeach od XIX w. Nacjona-

lizm jest rozumiany jako skutek nowoczesności, zjawisko, które powstało w określonych warunkach i wprost związane było z nadejściem nowoczesności. Artykuł zwraca uwagę na warunki pojawienia się nacjonalizmu, a poprzez analizę teorii Ernsta Gellnera dąży do określenia podstawowych przyczyn, z których powstanie i trwałość nacjonalizmu się wywodzi. Omawia podstawowe cechy tradycyjnego społeczeństwa, w którym nie było odpowiednich warunków do zaistnienia nacjonalizmu, a następnie pokazuje, jak te warunki zmieniły się w wyniku przejścia społeczeństwa z modelu tradycyjnego w nowoczesny. Podejmuje problem zmiany społecznej, jaka nastąpiła, przedstawia podstawowe cechy współczesnego społeczeństwa, w ramach którego zaistniało pole dla rozwoju nacjonalizmu. Kwestią kolejną jest pojawienie się nacjonalizmu w muzeach. Artykuł przedstawia, jak muzea zmieniały się w tworzącym się nowoczesnym społeczeństwie i jaką funkcję spełniał w tym procesie nacjonalizm. Artykuł krótko podsumowuje rolę, jaką nacjonalizm może odgrywać w muzeach współcześnie, oraz pokazuje, które elementy budowania tożsamości narodowej mogą potencjalnie pojawiać się najczęściej w muzeach.

Słowa kluczowe: tożsamość narodowa, nacjonalizm, nowoczesne społeczeństwo, muzeum, krytyczne studia muzealne, Gellner