

Introduction

Difference and Sameness as Modes of Integration

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Some Research Questions

Refugees from war zones, forced migration for economic reasons, ecological disasters and the globalization of production chains, finance and trade, have led to a phenomenon, most prevalent in large cities, that is no longer called diversity but ‘superdiversity’ (Vertovec 2007). Political responses vary from the celebration of diversity to xenophobic backlash and the justification of violent attacks against migrants. Intermediate positions are frequent. Immigration and the resulting diversity are described in ambiguous terms and regarded as a cause of worry. With how much diversity can a ‘host’ society cope?

Many states in Africa and Asia, which have not gone through the homogenization processes characterizing (to varying degrees) historical developments in Western European nation-states, have mottos such as ‘unity in diversity’; and, in attempts to achieve this goal, they experiment with various models of federalism. These examples also ensure that the question of when and how integration depends on sameness, or when and how it requires difference or a combination of both will remain on the table for some time. As such questions play a role in many violent conflicts, they are matters not just of academic interest but of life and death.

In discussing modes of societal integration from different continents and historical periods, contributors to this volume describe social orders that are based on diversity, rather than merely tolerating or coping with it. However, other forms of integration require assimilation resulting in sameness along a core dimension of social identity, or so their proponents claim.

The theme of coming to terms with diversity looms large in discourses of day-to-day politics (e.g. debates about the integration of refugee, ‘parallel cultures’,

secularism and politicized religion); but it also has a philosophical dimension, or implications for our ideas about being human and about the conditions required for realizing our full human potential. Do we have innate mechanisms for recognizing strangers and rejecting or mistrusting them? Are monolingualism, consistent systems of values and cultural homogeneity the best conditions for our intellectual and emotional development? Or are we adapted to diversity from the earliest stages of the development of our species onwards? According to Levinson (2006), we have an ‘interaction engine’. When we meet speakers of another language or people who use signs other than speech, such as the hearing-impaired, we start looking for clues for decoding communicative behaviour immediately, and, if we do not find a code, we develop one spontaneously through interaction. Large states with just one national language seem to be exceptional, when viewed on a larger historical scale. In rural Africa, even illiterate people tend to speak a handful of languages, which may even be unrelated to one another. This may be closer to the normal state of humankind. Why else should we all have the capacity to learn more than one language? The environment in response to which such a capacity developed must have been polyglot. How has this problem been dealt with so far?

Somewhat paradoxically, both difference and sameness are frequently used to explain societal cohesion and forms of political integration. Much has been written about the often violent homogenization processes that led to the emergence of modern nation-states, starting in Europe. In the classic example, France, religious minorities like the Albigensians and the Huguenots had to be massacred or expelled, because they impeded attempts to create a homogeneous nation by religious criteria. Even in the nineteenth century, the transformation of ‘Peasants into Frenchmen’ (Weber 1976) was still underway, and the homogenization massacres¹ of the twentieth century may trump even the forced conversions and burnings at the stake of suspected dissenters in the early modern period. Some modern nation-states have come into being through unification, that is, by integrating smaller units into a larger whole, while others have come into being through the disintegration of larger entities. Irrespective of these different histories, however, modern nation-states seem to require a higher degree of cultural sameness than other political entities, including some of earlier periods.

The kind of homogeneity that is required by the homogenizing agency changes from place to place and from one historical period to another. Religious prosecution of ‘heretics’ has, of course, a long tradition in Europe and beyond; and, later, unifying the language was an important part of the ‘nation’ state project. Some of us might recall their grandparents telling stories about how they were beaten at school for speaking Breton or Low German or some other language that had not made it to an official status. However, homogenization of some traits combines easily with differentiation of other traits. For example, people who have the idea that they and their co-citizens should all adhere to the

same religion and speak the same language might still advocate strongly differentiated gender roles. In fact, these convictions seem to combine frequently in conservative mind sets. Whatever the content of homogenizing efforts, however, all homogenizing policies seem to share one general point: that, for successful integration, the people to be integrated need to be the same along important lines of classification.

It should be noted that the concept 'integration' in this volume, especially in combination with adjectives like 'successful' (which have a normative ring: one should be integrated, one should integrate oneself), is sociocentric. It takes up a political discourse and a sociological perspective (in asking 'what keeps society together?'). We should not forget that, for many people who are not regarded as well integrated by others, this lack of integration is no problem at all. Some people love to sit alone in their gardens, others prefer a dog for company, and yet others spend their days and nights in front of a computer screen, communicating, but with whom? Real people, invented persons, machines? In this volume, the focus is not on individual psychological configurations, and we do not adopt a normative perspective on integration. It is not a 'must' to integrate into your local community, or any other community, if you are happy otherwise. It is not even a 'must' to be happy. We take up a political and a sociological discourse on integration, and our discussion remains immanent to the social domain, although we are well aware that one can look at human beings from many other perspectives than sociocentric and sociological ones.

In comparative perspective, Alexander Horstmann and I theorized some time ago (Horstmann and Schlee 2001) that a principle diametrically opposed to assimilation and homogenization, namely 'integration through difference', has obvious advantages, such as the reduction of competition. There seem to be conditions under which ethnically heterogeneous societies and political units can be internally peaceful and remain relatively stable over long periods of time.

There is a great deal of variation: in the recent processes of globalization of the nation-state model, some nation-states have incorporated significant levels of ethnic heterogeneity, while others have remained fairly homogeneous or, as late-comers among nation-states, are still struggling to achieve a higher degree of national unity along cultural lines.

While nation-states show great variation in their degree of ethnic heterogeneity, empires are always ethnically heterogeneous. In fact, ethnic heterogeneity is intrinsic to empires, in contrast to nation-states. I cannot really think of an empire with no ethnic or ethnicized distinction, at least between the rulers and the ruled; and very often empires comprise great ethnic diversity, which they tend to use for organizational purposes. Generally, the examination of different kinds of reasoning about sameness – or identity – and difference is the key to studying various forms of social and political integration, and this approach seems especially fitting in the comparative study of empires.

Table 0.1 *Four-field table*

	Good for integration	Bad for integration
Sameness	A	D
Difference	B	C

Theories that stress the importance of difference for social cohesion or systemic integration² implicitly or explicitly assume that sameness has disruptive effects, while those ascribing an integrative value to sameness assume the same disruptive effects for difference. We can thus arrange the arguments in a four-field table, with ‘sameness’ and ‘difference’ on one axis and their integrative value (‘good’ or ‘bad’ for integration) on the other.

The alphabetical order of the capital letters in the four fields, which proceeds counter-clockwise, does not have a deeper meaning. It just produces a kind of table of contents for the subsequent pages, i.e. it reflects the order of the following subchapters. In viewing this four-field table, one should keep in mind that, according to what has just been explained, some pairs of types are not mutually exclusive. A and C could have been collapsed into one, because people who think that sameness is good for integration also tend to think that difference is bad for it. A similar argument can be made about B and D. Still, many popular convictions stress one aspect or the other (e.g. they stress how bad differences are, without concluding that uniformity should be sought). Therefore, for present purposes, it makes sense to distinguish four different types of theory.

In the following, I consider popular assumptions in the same way as scholarly theories. When I mention those who have proposed sociological theories, I risk doing injustice to them by simplifying their positions. Durkheim, for example, has produced an extensive oeuvre rich in inspiration, and there is extensive secondary literature about him. If, here, I merely allude to his distinction between ‘mechanical’ and ‘organic solidarity’ (Durkheim 1998 [1893]), I am attempting neither to claim originality nor to do justice to Durkheim. I just do what most authors do when they refer to Durkheim, that is, I cite only those aspects of his works that seem useful with regard to my themes. My aim, in the following paragraphs, is not to make a contribution to the history of sociology or anthropology. All I want to achieve is a typology of arguments. In this typology, one can also include the perceptions of scholarly theories by a wider readership (i.e. vulgarizations of those theories) or any ideas that people have about sameness or difference, and their significance for integration, irrespective of the origin of these ideas. After an overview of such ideas, we shall ask ourselves how to move on from there.

Sameness as a Mode of Integration (A)

Examples that fit into field A of our graph abound. That people need to become like us in order to belong to us is so widespread an assumption that one could easily fill a book by listing its occurrences. In the field of sociological theories, those concerning ‘assimilation’ and ‘acculturation’ find their place here (Park 1930; Redfield, Linton and Herskovits 1936). Similarly, theories of socialization seek to explain how young people learn a culture, that is, the norms and values of their seniors and peers, whom they then come to resemble. The concept of culture itself seems to imply internal homogeneity and external distinction, and that is what sceptics criticize. In one definition, culture is the sum of what one needs to learn to become a competent member of a particular group, the bearers of that culture. Note that ‘culture’ in this sentence is used in two slightly different senses. In its first occurrence, it refers to a kind of competence, namely acquired knowledge and skills, as distinct from the genetically inherited ones (or the learned, rather than the genetic, components of complex forms of behaviour); and, in its second occurrence, it is the defining criterion of a bounded group of people, ‘a’ culture. Where there is one culture there are also many cultures, and that is where the critics come in. Many people dislike the conception of cultures as distinct, quantifiable units, and there are good arguments for this critical position. Nevertheless, many critics of ‘culture(s)’, in this sense, find the term hard to avoid.

What is uncontested is that sharing a ‘culture’ presupposes the acquisition of a form of sameness, including ways of organizing difference. (A simple example for sameness in the organization of difference would be that an uncle is different, even maintaining a different structural position from his nephew, but the two might share a way of organizing their difference, i.e. ideas about how uncles should treat nephews and vice versa.) You acquire culture by learning³ – no problem so far. And then you become like the other bearers of this culture – and here the problems arise, as the singular of the particular, i.e. a specific culture, implies the plurality of bounded units, i.e. cultures, which are hard to pin down in empirical reality.

Cultural relativism,⁴ in its extreme form (which may be a caricature created by its critics), assumes a world of mutually non-comprehensible (‘incommensurable’) but internally homogeneous ‘cultures’. If one were to take this assumption seriously, full humanity would have to be mediated by successful socialization into one such culture, resulting in full membership in it, which would, in turn, entail incomprehension of other cultures. The counter-argument – that one would have to overcome one’s restriction to one such culture (to the extent that such mutually unintelligible cultures exist) in order to become fully human in a more universal sense – is also possible.

If one observes debates in the media about the integration of migrants in (post-)industrial societies, one can distinguish between arguments for the

rejection and the acceptance of migrants. Arguments for rejection stress real or imagined religious or cultural differences. Arguments in favour of immigration often accept a degree of difference, sometimes even valuing it as a potential enrichment of the society in question. Usually, however, arguments in favour of accepting immigrants include requirements that the immigrants become like members of the 'host' society in a number of ways. Acquisition of the national language is one such requirement, while others include accepting core values (minimal consensus) such as democracy and tolerance of other groups, or, going beyond that, postulating that people have to identify with and to be proud of a constitutional order that transcends the cultures and religions of particular groups (constitutional patriotism) would be another such requirement. The underlying assumption in all cases is that a degree of sameness is a prerequisite of integration (see Pautz 2005 for a critical review of such a debate, the '*Leitkultur*' debate in Germany).

Difference as a Mode of Integration (B)

The obvious starting point for a discussion of difference and its role in society is Durkheim's 'organic solidarity'. He juxtaposes the 'mechanical' solidarity of 'segmentary' societies with the 'organic' solidarity of 'advanced' societies. The former is based on similarities or sameness, the latter on differences. While 'mechanical' is a metaphor which can be easily traced to physics and technology, both 'segmentary' and 'organic' are biological metaphors. If you cut a worm in the middle, both halves may crawl away in different directions. The cut may heal; indeed, the products of the cut heal in two separate places as two separate worms recover from a stressful separation. This is possible because a worm consists of segments that are all alike. Each of them contains everything that is essential to wormishness.⁵ If you do the same thing with a mammal, with heart and lungs ending up in one half, the guts and the liver in the other, both parts die. The reason for this is that organs do not replace each other; rather, they differ and stand in a complementary relationship to each other. The human body is one of the oldest metaphors (the other one being the ship) for state and society. We use this metaphor constantly. Anthropologists speak of 'corporate' groups.⁶ 'Corporations', 'corporate America', the 'organs' of the state, the 'body politic', et cetera, are very much part of common English. The metaphor was there long before Durkheim, but it is Durkheim's merit to have spelt it out and thought it through.

The functioning of vital organs is a condition of the survival of complex organisms. Individual organisms are units for selection (though, admittedly, not the only ones) and healthy organisms characterized by a well 'organized' interplay of organs live longer and have more offspring than those whose internal interplay does not unroll so smoothly. The evolution of complex organisms, which in spite

of their complexity function remarkably well, is therefore not a surprise from an evolutionary perspective. Humility, of course, demands that we acknowledge immediately that many things in the biosphere are still far beyond human engineering capacities and that admiration and curiosity are the appropriate attitudes toward our fellow organisms. What I mean to say is that, in principle, the emergence of complex forms does not present a problem to the evolutionary paradigm. (As long, of course, as the complex forms have some advantage for survival and reproduction. Comparison between organisms living at the same time shows that simple forms may also do quite well and sometimes live on while complex organisms go extinct.) As entire organisms are units of selection, the functionality of each single organ in the context of the whole becomes an adaptive feature and enhances fitness (in the biological sense of number of surviving progeny). Selection here favours functionality. As we transfer the concepts of 'part', 'whole' and 'functions' to society, however, they very soon turn out to be quite problematic. What is the whole? Of what is a part a part? Why should a part care about being functional for the whole? Or, if no intentions are involved, by which mechanism is this achieved? What is the unit of selection in the evolution of society or societies?

Durkheim's position may be called 'proto-functional' or 'functionalist *avant la lettre*'. It is an answer to the question 'what keeps society together?' This may appear to be a difficult question,⁷ but it is not as difficult as the next one. The more difficult question is 'how did that, which keeps society together, come about?' Whatever it is that causes societal cohesion, it must have evolved. Have societies with more cohesion survived while the ones with more disruptive internal dynamics have ceased to exist? Has cohesion, whatever its mechanisms are, evolved through variation and selection among distinct societies? Apart from being loaded with the burden of having to define what 'a society' is and which 'societies' present different cases and units of selection, there are other reasons not to pursue this type of question.

So far all answers to this question, which takes entire systems as its starting point, have been unsatisfactory. To base an evolutionary model of cultural development on system selection is not very convincing because such processes would require enormous periods of time.

In the 1970s, ecologically oriented neo-functionalists⁸ tried to explain the functional interplay internal to 'cultures' and 'societies' by system selection. Their theory implied the following: those social orders that did not work well have disappeared. Members of the surviving societies are not aware of the functional aspects of their beliefs and practices. If they had been, this might even have been detrimental. A morality based on religion only works if people believe in religion and not just in its instrumentality or functionality. People who explain religion by saying that it is good for society if people (preferably others) believe in it might not be the strongest believers and strongest holders of religion based moralities.

For those theorists, the functioning of the system requires that its parts worked unconsciously. Conscious processes such as social engineering (or simply sitting together to organize things so that they work better) play a negligible role in this kind of theory. But the costs of evolution would be high. Entire systems would have to die out and new ones would have to come into being. How many millennia this would take is not specified by these theorists. I am not aware that they even asked the question.

For a better explanation of social change, including the emergence of ‘coherence’ or ‘integration’, we need a theory that fits historical timeframes such as years, decades or centuries, and does not demand spans of time of the order of magnitude of biological evolution in order to fit historical timeframes; we need to get down to smaller units of selection with shorter lives.

I suggest that the decisions taken by individuals are suitable units of this kind. If we suspect that we have taken a wrong decision and become aware of alternatives, we may reject a decision and replace it by another one within a second or a day. How to get from the decisions of many individuals to the change of social systems is another problem, known as the micro/macro problem. I do not claim to have solved it. I just claim that we cannot get around it. We cannot just remain at the level of systems, nor can we remain at the level of individual action. Any theory about societal processes (the emergence of coherence, integration, conflict or social change) demands that we link the actor’s perspective with the system perspective.

The actor’s perspective offers some insight about the emergence of difference and the evolution of complementary relations on higher levels of aggregation and organization. In fact, actors do at least partly differentiate themselves from each other, sometimes intentionally.⁹ They may actively strive to avoid competition or demands for the redistribution of acquired wealth. A relevant theorem in this context is the trader’s dilemma. This theorem has been developed on the basis of empirical examples of traders in rural areas remote from state control. It is about making arrangements with one’s customers in the absence of mediation by third parties (the state might be out of reach or be perceived as hostile).

What Evers and Schrader (1994) have called the trader’s dilemma is this: if the trader defines himself too much as a foreigner, he risks his life; if he becomes too much a local person, he loses his profit. Tradespeople of foreign descent always live on the edge between these two forms of failure. They have to be foreign enough not to be obliged to grant credit. Rural societies in many parts of the world are characterized by an ethos of equality and redistribution. The household with many children will delegate workers to those where older people predominate. Everybody who works is fed, and those who cannot work anymore are fed, too. If measurements of the productivity of an individual household are represented on a graph, the result is a jagged curve; but if consumption is measured, one sees, instead, a series of flat waves approaching a

horizontal line, for the redistribution of consumables causes the fluctuations of production to be evened out. Risks such as illness, pests and hailstorms are counterbalanced this way. If someone is too rich, in spite of redistribution, they must not show their wealth. Otherwise they might be suspected of witchcraft or malicious magic: they are said to have the souls of their victims work in their fields during the nights, or the like. They are said to appropriate the vital energy of others, who, in turn, are tired when they awake in the morning or even become ill and die. Rural societies ensure that no individual stands out. If a member of a local peasant ethnic group opens a shop, he or she cannot evade the demands of general solidarity and the constraints of redistribution. He or she must grant credit, at least until the next harvest, and that harvest might not be good. Bankruptcy is only a few months away. The constantly repeating fate of rural shops in local hands can be summarized in the lyrics of a verse I saw on a wall in a rural shop in Kenya:

God made Man.
 Man made money.
 Money made many men mad.

To avert these obligations, one must mark a separation between the traders and the local population or at least define trade as a separate sphere, distinct (some would say ‘disembedded’) from ordinary social life and freed from its norms. If traders are, initially, too similar to members of the local population, they sometimes convert to other religions or sects in order to create this difference.

The trader of foreign descent, or the one who has had the opportunity to define himself as belonging to a distinct category of people to whom norms of redistribution do not apply, is able to evade the constraints of redistribution and does not need to listen to tough luck stories: ‘Your problem’. In Indian shops in East Africa, there are frequently printed pictures on the walls which express the shopkeepers’ philosophy. One such picture shows a fat Englishman in old-fashioned tails that are way too tight. Sitting on an overflowing money chest with his belly bulging over his belt, he wears a big grin under his top hat. The caption is: ‘I sold for cash’. On the picture next to this one, a gaunt figure in rags is displayed over the caption: ‘I sold for credit’. On the same wall, a little further away, there is a framed motto: ‘Do not mix friendship with business’.

But not-belonging and being ‘foreign’ also entails risks. Under Idi Amin, the Indians were expelled from Uganda. The action was disastrous for the country’s economy, but it was very popular, supported by the angry masses. There are abundant examples, from all around the world, of violence against tradespeople from minority groups – of murder up to the scale of genocide, robbery and arson. To the degree that they dissociate themselves from the society of the majority, traders are also excluded from the larger community of solidarity and protection.

If the foreignness is not to evoke hostility, it has to be counterbalanced by a certain degree of charity. That is why minorities that are successful in business often practice ostentatious generosity. For example, the Aga Khan hospitals and other social institutions might have contributed a lot to the acceptance of members of the Isma'iliyya sect in many parts of the world.¹⁰ In this way, interethnic relations constantly need to rebalance social distance.

It is not only in the case of traders and their customers that interethnic and interreligious relationships may often be understood in terms of the management of distance among social groups. Keeping the right distance is often an important aspect of interethnic relations. To take another example in which trade plays a role (but not with regard to specialized traders), in what is now Kenya, Maasai warriors took a hands-off approach to Kikuyu farmwives who came to them with trade goods, even in time of war.

Trade, which is often a product and a cause of occupational differentiation among neighbouring ethnic groups (there may be feedback loops between the two), contributes to the integration of a wider regional system. Let us, therefore, have a look at some examples of trans-ethnic trade.

Among the Maasai and the Kikuyu in pre-colonial Kenya, the differentiation of occupational niches was incomplete. The nomadic Maasai (to be exact, only certain groups of Maasai living in close proximity to the Kikuyu) raised cattle in the plains of the Rift Valley. The Kikuyu had withdrawn to the wooded highlands and cleared fields there. Kikuyu and Maasai, therefore, occupied separate ecological and economic niches as farmers and herders. The Kikuyu, however, continued to keep cattle, despite the fact that the Maasai believed that God had given all cattle to them. Insofar as they occupied the same or similar economic niches, they competed; but where their economic niches were distinct, they exchanged goods.

The relation between Kikuyu and Maasai was characterized by latent war and concurrent trade. The Kikuyu had an age-group system that was copied, in part, from the Maasai, who had probably developed it under East Cushitic influence. Age-group systems spread because they allow communities to expand, filling continuous areas. They are effective instruments for recruiting whole units of young men for raids on neighbouring ethnic groups. The latter are then forced by this to develop the same kind of organization, either to defend themselves or to create a balance between robbing and being robbed. (Incidentally, this is how early states spread, too.) The age-grade units of the Maasai and the Kikuyu raided each other's cattle and took every opportunity to kill men and boys among the enemy and to capture girls as well. At the same time, there was a kind of market peace for the women (Muriuki 1974: 86; Middleton 1979: 20). Kikuyu women could wander to the lowlands, undisturbed, with their crops in baskets, which were held by a strap across the forehead, to exchange them for animal products, and Maasai women could come from the opposite direction, undisturbed, with gourds of milk.

To summarize our contemplations about sameness and difference in the field of trade: trade between the Kikuyu and the Maasai was an exchange of products between producers. Other forms of interethnic relations involve professional traders, that is, people who specialize in buying and selling, without producing themselves. In surprisingly many cases, traders are of foreign descent (Stichweh 1992). This is not quite a universal phenomenon, but there are considerably more traders of foreign descent than tailors or policemen, not to mention farmers. This may have to do with the ‘Trader’s Dilemma’. The Phoenicians in the ancient Mediterranean, the Jews in medieval Europe, the Chinese in South East Asia, Hausa and Lebanese in West Africa (Peleikis 2003), the Greeks in Sudan, and Yemeni and Somali in Kenya and Tanzania are all examples of tradespeople who are ethnically different from most of their customers. The historic circumstances which made them become traders are different for each of these examples. However, there seem to be generally applicable factors which favour traders and their customers belonging to different ethnic groups, for this pattern is a frequent one, and it often survives for long periods of time. The trader’s dilemma reproduces difference, and the market peace, and all kinds of norms and rules protecting trade, to some extent (sadly not in all cases at all times) guarantee peace between people who – even if they are not specialized traders – tend to be different at least to the extent that they produce different things.

Difference as an Obstacle to Integration (C)

In recent contributions to conflict theory, ‘identity-based conflicts’ has become a popular catchword. Usually, it is contrasted with ‘resource-based conflicts’ and accompanied by the claim that ‘identity-based conflicts’ are much more bitter and tend to be more violent than those based on ‘resources’, which can be solved by negotiations and peaceful sharing.¹¹ There is a basic flaw to this line of reasoning. The definition of ‘identities’ or the study of ‘identification’ aims at answering questions starting with ‘who’, while the resource issue addresses the question ‘about what’. Who-questions (e.g. who sides with whom against whom, along which lines of identification, religious, ethnic or whatever) need to be asked in the analysis of any conflict, and the same is true for the question ‘about what’ (e.g. water, oil, jobs, political representation, etc.). ‘Identity’ and ‘resources’ are not qualifiers of different kinds of conflict but different aspects of all conflicts (Schlee 2009: 572).

In the context of theories that regard difference as an obstacle to integration, we can state that people who talk about ‘identity-based conflicts’ tend to regard difference, as such, as an obstacle.¹² Popular usages of the term ‘difference’ suggest that there is a widespread implicit conviction that differences are a cause of conflict. In phrases such as ‘people work out their differences’, ‘difference’ is used as a euphemism for ‘quarrel’ or ‘dispute’.

Modernization theories tended to imply that, with the formation of modern nation-states, ethnic, dialectal and cultural differences would go away. Starting with Glazer and Moynihan, there is a newer strand of literature which states that, in a number of cases, ethnic differences had not simply gone away, as modernization theorists had expected. The ‘melting pot’ had not produced a homogeneous alloy (Glazer and Moynihan 1963). In the 1970s, the resurgence of ethnic politics was noted in Western societies, where they were supposed to have disappeared (Esman 1977). Brass (1985) gives a broad overview of the literature on this topic. The common element of the different strands of this literature is that diversity, or cultural differences, are assumed to be a force which is antagonistic to shared statehood and peaceful integration. The various analyses differ only in the importance they attribute to such differences as persisting or re-emerging elements of the social and political landscape. That is, they share the same theoretical assumptions but differ in their perception of the empirical reality. Class is discussed at great length, as authors ask whether class is the real issue, while ethnicity is simply ‘false consciousness’, or whether ethnicity is something real, which can aggravate class conflict (Brass 1985: 20). In both cases, cultural difference is an inhibiting factor for the advancement of society. Some authors attributed a potentially very disruptive character to these differences and predicted the disintegration of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia long before it occurred (Brass 1985: 85).

This leads us to the literature about ‘ancient hatreds’ (Kaplan 1996; see Bringa 2005 and Besteman 2005 for a critique). Of course, to attribute ethnic violence simply to primordial sentiments and historical continuity (which is often constructed by taking leaps over epochs that display discontinuities) neglects all contemporary factors, such as political and economic incentives and outside intervention (Schlee 2008a: 6f). Of all examples of ‘Type C’ approaches reviewed briefly in this section, the ‘ancient hatreds’ literature makes the most direct link (or takes the shortest shortcut) in linking difference to disintegration and violence.

Sameness as an Obstacle to Integration (D)

Type D theories, which imply that sameness is an obstacle to integration, are mirror images of type B theories, which stress the integrative aspects of difference. Still there are some theories that put the emphasis on the disruptive effects of closeness and sameness rather than on integration through difference, although both ways of stating the problem lead to the same conclusions.

There is no category of people with which we share more of what defines us than our full siblings. We share with them as many genes as with our parents or children; we are of the same generation – in the case of multiple births, even the same age; and, in roughly fifty per cent of the cases, we are of the same gender.

Still 'sibling rivalry' is a phrase of wide currency because it refers to a common phenomenon. Students of animal behaviour, as well as anthropologists, use it frequently. Sibling rivalry takes the form of a deadly scramble when there are more piglets than the sow has teats. Milder forms, which many of us can observe in our own families, are teasing and boasting among children. Siblings tend to compete for the same resources, whether material ones or immaterial ones such as the love of their parents. In a large proportion of humankind, for which the provisioning of basic nutrients is precarious, close birth spacing may reduce the chances of survival of individual children significantly. The competition is about food, and what is at stake is survival. Where people can afford to have more complex needs than to fill their bellies, sibling rivalry is about parental attention and support, rank or position in peer groups, inheritance or succession. From the Book of Genesis onwards, the literature of the world abounds with examples.

It has often been observed that minimal differences are often emphasized in negative evaluation of others, especially in cases of manifest or latent hostility. Middle-middle class people denigrate lower-middle class people, lower-middle class people denigrate upper-lower class people, and so on. Discrimination is directed against members of adjacent classes (Fox 2004: 119). While little of what is said in such a context may reflect good taste, many would consider it to be more reprehensible to talk in a depreciating way about someone far below oneself on the commonly perceived social scale than about someone closer to one's own social position. A person in an elevated and secure social position might not feel the need to deplore the lack of style or the rude manners of the classes engaged in manual labour, and, if he or she did so, it might be perceived as arrogant and even vulgar.

The principle of the minimal difference applies not only to class but to all axes of social identification. The sound of a language unrelated to our own and which we have never heard before may elicit few emotions in us apart from, maybe, friendly curiosity. It may also be experienced as completely unfamiliar and even non-human, if it is compared to animal sounds. It is mostly neighbouring dialects, often so close to our own that we understand them, which invite a different kind of evaluation. They are interpreted in strongly value-laden, even moral, terms and may be perceived as sounding arrogant, pretentious, harsh, inarticulate, sloppy or boorish. Or take religion. Protestants tend to direct their suspicions about idolatry and latent polytheism (in the guise of saint worship) against Catholics. Hindus, to whom the same kind of criticism may apply, are often not found in the immediate vicinity, so the rejection is more strongly, and with more serious consequence, articulated against the close other than against the distant other.¹³

Class and dialect distinctions are relevant within a language community (e.g. Labov 2006); speakers of other languages would hardly understand what these minimal differences are all about. On similarly low levels of difference, we

struggle about the correct interpretation of our own religious heritage. Tolerance is more easily applied to adherents of other religions than to the ones of the 'wrong' interpretations of our own. Sometimes, a discourse about language really is about language, just as one about religion may really be about religion. In many cases, however, we discover when we examine the social context that these discourses are about people who are in many ways too close to us, so close that they may be viewed as competitors for positions or other resources. The emphasis on the minimal difference articulates the rivalry 'within': within a political system, within a certain segment of the job market, within an intellectual community, etc. It has as much to do with sameness as with difference.

The Interplay of Difference and Sameness in Processes of Social Integration

To get beyond this four-field table, which roughly classifies existing social theories and popular assumptions about the significance of difference and sameness for social integration, we need to look at real life situations. In real life, sameness and difference are not simply 'good' or 'bad' for integration; rather, processes of integration are characterized by the complex interplay of both sameness and difference. One comes to terms with differences. They may be a factor in the peaceful division of labour, but at the same time their disruptive potential must be bridled. Ways of handling differences, of dealing with this disruptive potential, may, for example, involve fostering interaction in some contexts, such as the market, and avoiding it in others.

Real and self-styled peacemakers can be heard to give two kinds of advice which are the opposite of each other. They may encourage or discourage interaction. A couple with a strained relationship may be advised 'to put everything on the table', 'to discuss everything' and 'to do more things together'. On the other hand, marriages in societies in which there are clearly distinct male and female spheres and spouses interact little, and that only in clearly defined roles, may be quite peaceful if not harmonious. At the level of groups, including ethnic groups and nations, one can find the same contradictions.

How much interaction there should be, for the sake of peace, between macro-groups perceived as different is a time-honoured question. Living in a world of emerging warlike nation-states, classic political theorists discussed how to achieve peace among different groups or polities. Rousseau proposed economic self-sufficiency and isolation. The less interaction there is, the less can go wrong. The probability of war is reduced (Joas 2000: 55). Others held just the opposite view, proposing the multiplication of links between the potential rivals and enemies. Kant suggested constitutional arrangements and contracts, an eighteenth-century premonition of the EU; and Adam Smith saw trade as a means of peaceful integration (*ibid.*: 56).

If one wants to take up such lines of reasoning today, one can no longer simply assume that the differences among states or groups are naturally given. One has to discuss the construction of cultural difference, which is closely interwoven with the different forms of interaction, peaceful or hostile, that one wants to study.

Rather than treating this problem as one of minimizing or maximizing interaction, one may more fruitfully treat it as one of optimization. How can one reap as many advantages of interaction as possible without incurring too many of the costs and risks associated with it?

Another way to look at the same problem is to pose the question of how social distance is handled. If you want to rule over someone, you need at least some social distance, which has to do with a postulated difference. In a situation of total familiarity and equality, there can be no rule of one over another. On the other hand, a degree of identification and some feeling of closeness between rulers and ruled reduce the costs of rule by reducing the necessity of monitoring, control and violent oppression. So here, as is often the case in life, we find the optimal solution to be somewhere in the middle. If, in a Machiavellian fashion, we want to teach how to rule (which is not my primary concern), we can tell those who aspire to rule neither to be too close to nor too distant from the ones they want to rule. The optimal social distance is in-between.

Yet another approach to the same basic problem is that taken by Kraft, Lüdtke and Martschukat (2010: 10ff.) in their introduction to a recent volume presenting new perspectives on colonialism. They juxtapose perceptions of clearly marked boundaries between colonizer and colonized, premised on total otherness, with stories about everyday life in which this boundary was blurred. In complex settings marked by apparent paradoxes – e.g. the coexistence, in a given relationship, of exploitation and paternalistic benevolence or the claims of colonizers that colonial subjects are racially inferior and, simultaneously, amenable to elevation by a civilizing mission – difference is constantly renegotiated.

What the Present Volume Contributes to our Understanding of Difference and Sameness as Modes of Integration

In the following overview, rather than just summarizing the contributions to this volume, I take the liberty of grouping them into blocks of twos or threes according to which general themes they address, from my perspective, at the risk of foregrounding things which were in the background and vice versa. The emphasis of the authors may differ from mine and will only become clear if the reader turns to the respective chapters. I will also part from the usual practice of giving an editor's overview of a volume by occasionally referring to literature published elsewhere.

Interethnic Communication and Social Distance

The first contribution to this volume, the one by Pfaff-Czarnecka on Nepal, deals with caste. The second, by Ruf on Mauritania, deals with caste-like divisions like that between the warrior class (*hassân*) or the scholar class (*zwâya*) and with the hereditary stigma of being of slave descent. The privileged position given to caste in this volume is not coincidental. The model case of a caste system, the Indian caste system, can be seen as an example of a specific kind of meta-ethnic system.¹⁴ It is known that its genesis is due to the circumstance that initially horizontally aligned ethnic groups were integrated into a vertical hierarchy of castes according to ritual criteria. In this volume, Pfaff-Czarnecka shows how the Hindu caste system in Nepal functions as an encompassing vertical structure that even incorporates non-Hindu groups into its middle ranks.

Apart from being an interesting case for theories about difference and sameness in processes of social integration, caste is also interesting in the context of political morality and 'anthropological projects' such as 'cosmopolitanism'.¹⁵ It is one of those social phenomena from which it is difficult to maintain analytical distance. It contradicts Western concepts of liberty and equality, and it may be irreconcilable with those human rights that some claim are or should be universally valid.¹⁶ Readers may expect us to point an accusing finger at the caste system, saying that, unlike botanists who classify plants, social scientists, who are also members of human society, cannot simply classify social forms without taking sides against those which do not correspond to their core values as citizens. Hierarchy, refusal of commensality or refusal to touch certain categories of co-citizens for fear of pollution, occupational specialization by birth and other features of Indian caste thinking are hard to reconcile with liberal Western values, and expectations that one should condemn them as a matter of course are hard to avoid. The intrusion of such moral imperatives, understandable or even inevitable as it is, can, of course, also obstruct a more detached, scientific perspective, which tries to find out how things work and claims the liberty to postpone moral judgements for a while. Such a position would have to acknowledge that the Indian caste system has been an instrument of relatively peaceful integration over long periods of its history, changing in many ways but preserving some basic features, and that its durability does not rely on the continuous use of open violence. One may, of course, find 'structural' or latent forms of violence in it, and there is no need to idealize or to romanticize it. Nor do ethnographers have to carry cultural relativism to the point of feeling obliged to like what they write about. Sharma (1994), for example, writes about the Indian caste system and is very critical of it. But critics of caste might also acknowledge that what strikes the observer of the Indian caste system as remarkable is the relatively high level of heterogeneity in combination with the relatively low level of physical violence. In some respects, Pfaff-Czarnecka's account is reminiscent of Leach's

description of ethnic diversity and interethnic systems of communication using visible signs of differentiation in highland Burma (Leach 1954). The Nepalese are well versed in reading such signs. In addition to aspects of costume and jewellery that indicate marital status or ethnic and caste association, the animals in the compound give indications of what their owners can eat and, thus, of their caste.

Being able to classify one another and having access to a common meta-culture of symbols of subordination and difference is a very limited form of commonality. There does not need to be more commonality than that existing between old enemies, practiced opponents in warfare. Even these have a common repertoire of threats, of tactics and strategies learned from the opponent, common forms of propaganda and iconographies of violence that mirror one another down to the finest of details – except that the positive and negative valences are reversed: Y has a negative attitude toward Z, just as Z has toward Y. Therefore, understanding one another is not necessarily the same as getting along.

In Nepal it is not friendship or enmity but distance that is the most important factor in mediating relations among different groups. The hierarchical order, based on requirements that people of low status avoid those of high status, has long served to create distance and prevent friction among castes. But fairly recently, people of lower rank have begun to question it and to consider the symbols associated with them to be demeaning. Thus, a ‘victim’ status has been created and used for ethnic mobilization. But as long as distance and the accentuation of difference are maintained, caste systems can apparently remain stable for long periods of time.

These findings about Nepal resonate with observations about other parts of the Indian subcontinent. With reference to a village in South India, Münster (2007) states that he found it to be a back-to-back rather than a face-to-face community. The village as a social unit for him appears to be a colonial construct.¹⁷

Recently, the Nepalese caste system and the political order based on it have come under pressure. In terms of sameness and difference, we can read Pfaff-Czarnecka’s findings in her contribution to this volume in the following way: the Government has gone too far in the direction of ‘integration through sameness’. High-caste Hindu symbolism and the Nepalese language had come to dominate the public sphere to such an extent that other ethnicities were excluded. Their languages and religious practices played no public role at the national level. In response to this exclusion, members of the lower castes have mobilized and re-introduced their ethnic symbols and practices, which were still thriving in the private sphere, and in some local settings, into the public sphere and the national framework.

It may be useful to dwell on the Indian caste system a bit longer, since further down we will come across the problem of whether we can apply it to Africa or to certain types of interethnic relations in Africa.

One problem with ‘caste’ is the range of the application of this concept. In his examination of problems and possibilities encountered in the formulation of cross-culturally applicable terminologies, Jensen (1999: 66; my translation) takes ‘caste’ as an example of a term that has often been used in comparative studies, but which fails time and again to shed light on what it is meant to describe: ‘[T]he social contexts, for example, in African societies [are. . .] so different and provide little opportunity for comparative analysis with Hindu society, such that a rendering of the term caste that goes beyond the associations with the latter can serve no purpose’. Although the term is of Portuguese origin – which means that it has already gone through one process of cultural transfer – it has experienced such a reduction to the Indian case that, in today’s usage, it is only applicable there. Some do not find it very useful even there. ‘Are there castes in India?’ (*Y a-t-il des castes aux Indes?*) is the title of an old essay by Meillassoux (1977 [1973]: 277–311). He thinks that class is the more important category and that caste is just an ideological screen (for a critique cf. Barnett et al. 1976). But on some general level of client-like relationships, he does perceive similarities to West Africa. Jensen defines caste in broad terms which may enable scholars to apply the concept outside India. He notes that the elements of endogamy and vocational specialization have been central in previous attempts to use the term in non-Indian cultures. Endogamy may need some specifications. In India, women may frequently marry ‘up’ (hypergamy), while other rules of endogamy might strictly entail marriage within the ethnic, sub-ethnic or status group (isogamy, endogamy in all gender configurations). So, those forms of marriage which transcend caste divisions also clearly imply the idea of hierarchy. In Jensen’s definition, hierarchy and the distinction between status and power – so prominent in analyses of the Indian caste system (Dumont 1979 [1966]) – no longer play a role. The comparison between Indian and non-Indian ‘caste systems’ suffers from the incongruence that, outside India, the hierarchical relationships between ‘castes’ are often not accepted equally by all parties involved, as they are in India, at least in principle. There may be disagreement in the middle range as to which caste is actually higher or lower than the other (Dumont 1979 [1966]: 21, 110f; 1980: 57, 81) and in recent times class, secular convictions, notions of race and ‘ethnic-like’ units which have come about by interregional and vertical amalgamation of sub-castes have provided alternative choices to identification to notions of caste based on descent and ritual purity (Barnett 1977), but at least the basic notion of status difference between the four varnas seems to have been and continues to be accepted by many Indians since Vedic times. In cases in which the concept of caste has been used in Africa, sometimes agreement about the hierarchical order is reported (e.g. Haberland 1993), but often no such agreement can be found (e.g. Amborn 2009).

Occasionally, one finds signs that a caste system with the characteristics postulated for India (division of religious and ruling functions, association of ritual

purity and status) exists outside of India. Bali for example, is considered 'Hindu' for good reason, despite the fact that the Indian influences date back 1500 or more years. Howe (1987: 141) must, nevertheless, admit that having worked out these similarities, the basis for his comparison of caste in Bali and India is crumbling, precisely because of the question of their hierarchical arrangement. Priests, kings and ascetics may very well be separate ideals, each of which forms the foundation for parallel hierarchies based on completely different value criteria, namely the standards of holiness, royalty and self-control.

Quigley (1997) would prefer to abstain from linear, ladder-like models of hierarchy completely. These models disguise the fact that the Brahmans and the Untouchables may have more in common with one another than with the other castes and thus do not form opposite poles to one another. According to him, numerous ethnographic observations speak against such a model: 'To resolve these disputes arbitrarily . . . by squeezing castes into an artificial vertical line where each caste is higher or lower than every other is simply to violate ethnographic reality' (Quigley 1997: 115). Quigley himself prefers a model of concentric circles in which proximity to the king or to the locally dominating caste is the basis for status. Status differences do exist but not on a single scale since the centre can be approached from different sides, depending on one's function at court (or wherever the ritual focus may be) (*ibid.*: 116). Such circular models have also been considered for Bali, where categories of 'centre versus periphery' also find their analogy in 'high vs. low' status (Parkin 1987: 59, referring to Hobart 1978).

But some status difference accepted by the higher and the lower alike needs to be there in one form or another, or else it would be difficult to speak of castes at all, even if other defining criteria are met.

We shall come back to ethnicity and caste below, in connection with Diallo's contribution. One aspect often attributed to caste systems, namely conflict avoidance, or at least conflict regulation through the creation of economic niches and the differentiation of rights, rather than the separation of territories, can also be found in other case studies in this book.

As the ethnographic examples in this volume have been chosen to illustrate theoretical ideas, it does not matter whether they are up-to-date in political history or other day-to-day matters. I have grouped them in this introduction according to the comparative lines which occurred to me, and the order of the chapters follows these lines. Other readers may see other connections between them. In fact, this is what the 'mission' of this publication is all about: it provides pieces for comparative games, and like chess pieces, these can be put into many different configurations. I have avoided grouping these chapters regionally or by time period, because whether a given chapter deals with Africa or Asia or with historical or recent data is irrelevant to the points I want to make about difference and sameness. Indeed, one of the chapters goes as far back as Chinggis Khan,

several of them refer to the colonial period and others have their 'ethnographic present' in the 1990s or the 2000s. So now I move on from social distance in the context of economic exchange to economic and social inequalities.

Economic Differentiation and Social Hierarchies

The chapter by Ruf shows that after the abolition of slavery, the free and freed populations of Mauritania did not form separate segments; rather, they continued to be interdependent parts of society. People who had been freed oriented themselves on the model of the free, imitating them as closely as possible. The elevated status of members of the free population is confirmed by the fact that the freed never really manage to get it right. The freed measure themselves on the scale of the free; or, to use an equestrian metaphor, members of the two groups run in the same race, but with different handicaps. An exception to this seems to be the field of music, where (as in the Americas) slaves and ex-slaves have developed particular forms, appreciated by others but regarded as different from their own. Ruf in this context speaks of 'equality within difference'.

To a degree, the difference between free and freed in Mauritanian society may be described in the idioms of 'white' and 'black'. Since, however, so-called 'blacks' include both the descendants of ex-slaves and members of other low-status groups with no history of slavery, the two dichotomies are not quite congruent. Both 'blacks' and 'whites' are part of a Mauritanian society whose major characteristic is the Hassaniyya dialect of Arabic. Only on the next higher taxonomic level does one find the distinction between Mauritians and non-Mauritians, the latter of whom include the 'other blacks', that is, the West Africans from the societies from which the Mauritanian ex-slaves originated. But, as Ruf explains, members of the freed Mauritanian population are no longer able to return to their countries of origin, due to the loss of their genealogies and their past.

The wives of the Senegalese *tirailleurs* who were stationed in Mauritania during the colonial period provide a case study of the consequences of the return of ex-slaves, or the descendants of slaves, to their African regions of origin. When these women returned to Senegal with their husbands, they found that they could not escape the stigma of slavery. Their husbands were in no way ignorant of the institution of slavery, and they treated the ex-slaves in their polygynous households as second class wives (Ruf 1999: 191, citing McDougall 1988). 'Back to the roots' is thus no escape from slavery, since there is not a single country in West Africa where having once been a slave, or having slaves as ancestors, is not stigmatized. The only chance for ex-slaves to really be free is among groups to which they belong by descent. But patrilineal descent is tied to marriage, which was denied to slaves. Therefore, the full reintegration of the descendants of slaves in their societies of origins is only possible among groups with matrilineal descent,

as among the Ashanti (Fortes 1969: 147). But even this possibility depends on continuity of genealogical knowledge.

Thus, the freed, including both those who were freed individually and those who were freed merely as a function of state law, have no other option than to compete for status with other Mauritians on a Mauritanian scale of values. More often than not, this leads to a denial or a reinterpretation of the past rather than to pride in their past and its higher valuation.

Ruf's findings relate to the issue of social distance and its strategic use, discussed above, while pointing to gender-specific differences. For a male slave, spatial distance and a specialization different from that of his master may be the keys to asserting a sphere of agency of his own and to achieving a degree of social advancement. For example, a male slave in a pastoralist society may practice gardening in an oasis, while his master roams about, returning to the oasis only periodically. Or, if a male slave is close to his master, he often performs the same kinds of tasks, for example those associated with herding. This, too, may have a liberating effect, relatively speaking. For female slaves, however, the key to advancement is closeness to the master. By giving birth to his child, she can be freed and rise in status. But working closely with the mistress in the domestic sphere is no help at all, for the mistress usually gives detailed orders, assigning tasks that are clearly distinct from her own. As Ruf notes, '[w]omen working under these conditions reproduced their dissimilarity from the free women'. Thus, work may have a liberating effect for men, who either work independently of their masters at distinct tasks or together with their masters at common tasks. Women's work does not have this effect, both because of their spatial closeness to their mistresses and because of the different kinds of tasks that they perform.

In this inescapable closeness between a female slave and her mistress, indirect kinship between the two can come about. By suckling her mistress's children, the slave woman becomes milk-mother of the latter's children. Therefore, her own children, irrespective of who begot them (the master may have had sexual access to her, but her own children may also stem from a slave marriage), become milk-siblings of the children of her mistress. So, in spite of all the continuously marked and reproduced differences, a free woman might have had to accept her closest helper and continuous companion, her female slave, as a co-mother of her own children, the mother of the milk-siblings of her own children – a relationship considered so close in Islam that it precludes intermarriage and sexual relations. This makes the female slave the mistress's potential rival for the favours of her husband and maybe even a potential cowife – a dense relationship indeed.

Competition seems to be the key to explaining the difference between being the slave of a 'warrior' and being the slave of a 'scholar', the two gross categories within 'white' Mauritanian society (a bit caste-like, but without a clear hierarchy). In Mauritania, unlike other Islamic countries, there is no tradition

of religious scholars of slave status. Scholarship was the capital of the 'scholars' among the free, and they kept it for themselves.

Men of Mauritania, who were, originally, pastoralist warriors, have many tasks for their slaves that prevent them from becoming competitors in their own preferred fields of activity. The slaves are cultivators and craftsmen. Therefore, the proportion of slaves is relatively low in the deserts of the nomadic north; and there is a higher proportion of slaves in the south, where water is more readily available, where there are more fixed settlements, and where nomadic trajectories are shorter, so that pastoralists can network more easily with sedentary populations, including their own dependents.

Ruf's description of Mauritania resonates with the literature about nomadic Arabs in the Sudan, where slaves were frequently freed and incorporated into Arab descent groups, though often as lower-status members with less wealth (Cunnison 1966: 80 about Humr Baggara). Alternatively, freed slaves in Sudan became clients of wealthy and leading personalities, strengthening their power base (Asad 1970: 174 about Kababish). The literature stresses the close ties, based on loyalty, between patron and client (Asad 1970: 190ff.). The relationship of a herd owner to his herder, be he a slave or freeman, cannot be based on brute force. To let someone move around freely with all the wealth one owns on the hoof requires trust, and a relationship that is familial in character, regardless of the herder's origins. Therefore, nomads do not have much use for kinds of slavery based purely on enforcing ownership.

In describing the situation of ex-slaves, including their continued dependence on their former masters in the more sedentary settings of the south, Ruf openly takes sides with the ex-slaves, without denying his own egalitarian ethos, be it of 'western' origin or not.

There follows a chapter by Schlee with the title 'Identification with the State and Identifications by the State'. This chapter marks a shift of emphasis as the argument of the book unrolls, since the state plays a greater role in the chapters following it than in the chapters preceding it. In northern Ivory Coast, the case described in the chapter by Diallo, the state identifies with urban people and favours pastoralists as providers of meat for urban markets. The chapter by Grätz about northern Benin shows statehood and shared citizenship as forces competing with other offers of identification.

In northern Ivory Coast, too, we find an ethnic division of labour with each group characterized by corresponding rights and skills. The Senufo are farmers who are also masters of the earth, authorizing settlement on it or withholding authorization, as the case may be. The Malinke are merchants. And the Fulbe are hired herders or independent pastoralists, who are consulted when the Senufo have problems with the few cattle they themselves own, at least in those cases where they are not maintained by Fulbe herders or given over to the care of Fulbe pastoralists (cf. Diallo, Guichard and Schlee 2000). As Muslims, the Fulbe do

not have to deal with the local divinities which are so essential for the relationship of the farmers to the earth they cultivate. In a way, this is a mirror-image of what Ruf describes in his chapter on Mauritania, where it is precisely the people with the greatest longevity and a higher standing as Muslims who have to meet the higher and more rigid ritual requirements.

Thus far, the relationship between the Senufo and the Fulbe is a complementary one, and one would therefore assume that it is a peaceful one as well; but it is prejudiced by the damage caused by the Fulbe cattle to the crops and to the harvest stored in the fields. The Senufo hunting associations take drastic retribution, and the Fulbe would undoubtedly be much weaker in this conflict if they did not have state forces on their side. The urban elites in the south of the country have a vested interest in a secure supply of beef, and through their political influence they ensure a continued Fulbe presence in the rural areas. In Ghana similar conflicts of interest between farmers and urbanites have on occasion led to the expulsion of the Fulbe back to Burkina Faso (see Tonah 1993: 127ff.). Thus, the state or its constituent parts always have a role to play in interethnic systems, not only as an external factor but also as a factor that has incorporated ethnic forces or even as an instrument of ethnically defined interest groups.

Diallo cites Fulbe living among Bobo and Bwa as cases of acceptance into farming societies. The newcomers then become part of 'a ritual division of duties that becomes the basis for a close interdependence'. The creation of ritual interdependence resonates with what I have found in the *Gada* systems of different ethnic groups in Northeast Africa, likewise in a relatively egalitarian setting (Schlee 1998).

Taking up the earlier discussion of caste systems (above), in many ways differences rather than similarities prevail between what Diallo describes and caste systems like the one described by Pfaff-Czarnecka. Ethnic relations in northern Ivory Coast may, when viewed from the outside, be considered almost egalitarian. However, the actors themselves may very well maintain a hierarchical view of their society, more often than not with hierarchies in which their own respective ethnic group retains the highest position in the scale of importance; but it is in no way possible to speak of a single universally accepted hierarchy. A further West African example is the town of Tanguiéta in northern Benin, subject of the chapter by Grätz (see also Grätz 2006). Northern Benin is geographically part of the Sudanic zone and, thus, of a belt of extreme ethnic and linguistic differentiation. Grätz describes heterogeneity and commonality on several levels. He describes a great variety of linguistic differences and heterogeneous origins within larger socio-economic categories (farming ethnic groups, trader ethnic groups, civil servants). Cross-cutting these internal differences are several connecting elements such as discourses of autochthony among the farmers, the colonial stereotyping that places all farmers in a single category, the 'culture of the Zongo' (in the traders' quarter) and two *linguae francae* (Hausa and Dendi) among the

traders. Again, pastoralism is represented by the Fulbe.¹⁸ Due to their association with different economic specializations, these larger categories stand in a complementary relationship to one another. These various modes of identification, and the ways in which they are subject to change, are studied by Grätz in contexts of local, regional and state political action.

Grätz describes the internal integration of the different groups and the wider categories into which they are amalgamated as ‘distinct moral places’. These moral places become part of a wider whole by an ‘(unwritten) contractual relationship between them’. In social and cultural terms this wider integration is limited. It is limited to the political sphere, and, even there, the wider unity is fragile. Due to economic differentiation, there is one more sphere of interaction: the market. This may remind us of Furnivall’s (1944) classical study of plural society in colonial Malaya, where he found largely separate groups interacting only at certain nodal points.¹⁹ From another angle, Grätz’s chapter invites comparison with that by Pfaff-Czarnecka. He shows that the contrast between places for the consumption of alcoholic beverages and snack bars or coffee houses distinguishes non-Muslims from Muslims in northern Benin, just as practices regarding food and domestic animals are indicators of caste in Nepal.

Grätz has a processual view of social identities, reminiscent of the theory of path dependence: apparently insignificant events trigger irreversible processes, leading to dramatic effects, by limiting future choices. He calls this amplification. The amalgamation of farming groups, on the one hand, and the Muslim trader groups (the Zongo), on the other, widens the units of inclusion and exclusion, while politicization – the fact that the cultural and economic distinctions become the basis of political alliances – further amplifies these identities by giving them new functions and new meanings.

These amalgamated social categories within Tangietà, each of which comprises a myriad of original ethnic groups and local origins, also make sense in terms of the ‘information economics of identification’, a way of thinking about identity which requires further development (for a beginning see Schlee 2010): how much can a social identity cost? Obviously, acquiring the right to an attractive social identity, which comes with an exclusive status and economic privileges or political power, is worth a greater effort than a less attractive one; but all activities with all identities have a price tag. When it comes to acquiring, shedding, communicating, foregrounding or hiding an identity, or using an identity to advertise one’s goods and services, or checking whether the identity claim of another person is justified or not – all of this requires that one make a certain amount of communicative effort or persuasion (costs)²⁰ and also leads to a greater or lesser material or moral reward (benefit). Complex, highly fragmented or little known identities do not make sense in many contexts. The costs of communicating them are too high and the rewards are too low. The middle-range identifications described by Grätz which combine (and obscure) sub-identities and

establish some simple equations (e.g. all traders are Muslims and all butchers are Hausa or convert to that ethnic identity) may be quite plausible constructs from such a perspective.

These forms of identification can be traced to the colonial period. This opens another dimension of comparison, this time within the present volume: in which ways are such classifications shaped within political systems and by them and what are the causes of their persistence? Hansen and Kaiser (below) deal with the persistence of Soviet categories in the post-Soviet sphere, and Schlee (below) discusses the role of ethnic classifications in empires.

Transnational Relations and Cross-Border Ethnicities

Just like the flow of commodities, economic networks and ethnic as well as religious loyalties cut across national borders. Moving back to Asia, we find that changes have occurred on a dramatic scale since the demise of the Soviet Union, but also that a Soviet or post-Soviet identification linking Central Asia to Russia has persisted until the present, alongside other macro-identifications. The trade networks of the 1990s, examined by Kaiser (2001), run straight through the Turkic language areas and beyond, along the Great Silk Road. For this reason, Menashri (1998) has published an edited volume dealing with this region entitled *Central Asia Meets the Middle East*. Following Bennigsen and Broxup (1984), Menashri differentiates three levels of identification among Central Asian Muslims, ‘Sub-national, that is by clan or tribe; supra-national, whether religious (Islamic) or ethnic (Turkic); and national’:

Central Asian Muslims tend to discount national consciousness as a ‘Soviet creation forced upon the population’ in order to divide the Muslim territories and ensure Russian control. By contrast, they claim, the sub-national and supra-national are ‘deeply rooted in the culture’ of the region. In spite of all Soviet efforts, they are cutting across the Soviet imposed national divisions. (Menashri 1998: 5)

Despite a wide-ranging and encompassing identification with the Islamic world and with other non-Uzbek speakers of Turkic languages (cf., Finke 2014), the citizens of Tashkent do not live in an exclusively Turkic-Islamic world, but have integrated ethnic Others on a smaller scale. The Russian language, if not Russian people, informs the jargon of petty trade and the Korean market, which is indeed populated by Koreans, and where products from South Korea and also from Europe and Japan are sold. In Central Asia, there is a substantial, now mostly Russian-speaking, Korean population, the elderly members of which were sent there forcibly from the Russian Far East during the Stalinist period.

Religious and linguistic forms of identification cut across national borders and are factors in the development of transnational space. Not only are Turkish-speaking teachers of Islam from Germany present (Kaiser 2001), but also Turkish-German companies, active as contractors and investors. Other (i.e. non-Turkish) German companies, as well as the German labour market, benefit indirectly (and often unknowingly) from the transnational activities in these ethnically influenced sectors. A German-Turkish transnational space has spread into Central Asia (Faist 2000). The Russian advertisements and signs in Istanbul, where Russian is used as a lingua franca even among speakers of Turkic languages (Kaiser 2001), are thus mirrored by Turkish and Germany-Turkish influences in Central Asia.

More recently, Kaiser has widened his geographical horizon and extended his period of observation. In their contribution to the present volume, Hansen and Kaiser describe how and why pan-Turkic identification has not quite played the role some people expected it to play in the 1990s. Instead, they find that a post-Soviet identity is remarkably persistent, not only in Central Asia but also in the Baltic states, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova, and the Caucasus. They speak of ‘transsociational figurations’ in the entire space of the former Soviet republics. These appear to represent transcontinuities, that is, continuities which survive a system change. Among the features that have persisted since Soviet times are ways of understanding ethnicity and interacting with members of other ethnic groups. These are at work both within the Russian federation and beyond it, informing new nationalisms and their role in relation to other nationalisms. What is shared here is not ethnicity, of course, but the meta-ethnic level, the way people recognize or perceive each other’s ethnicity or nationality and interact accordingly (Schlee 2008a: 10). These ways of organizing ethnicities and interacting in a pluri-ethnic framework may have some roots in pre-Soviet times, in the Russian Empire, which already undertook the ‘standardisation of its ethnic-cultural diversity’ (Schorkowitz 2015: 8).

Another shared feature which, as Hansen and Kaiser show, has survived the Soviet Union in its former space is a culture of informality. There appear to be practical considerations and material incentives attached to the continuation of Soviet cultural practices which help people to cope with and to circumvent bureaucracy. Trade within the post-Soviet space makes up a considerable proportion of the trade of the successor states of the Soviet Union, and bureaucracy continues to make trade and other aspects of life difficult, necessitating creative solutions.

As we have seen, trade seems to contribute to the maintenance of – even an emphasis on – ethnic differences, instead of blurring them (Evers and Schrader 1994). Thus, besides identities and postulated kinship in relationships that are maintained over long distances, we find marked differences in the immediate vicinity and in the closest space of interaction. This is the case not only in Central

Asian cities; rather, we may be following, here, a trail of apparent paradoxes that are, in fact, basic principles of social organization.

‘Difference’ and ‘identity’ are terms that refer to one another. What we mean by ‘identity’ is nothing other than the absence of difference, that is, being the same with regard to a particular dimension of characteristics or a complex of features. There are enough gurus and modern medicine men who deal with the ‘deeper’ psychological and existential connotations of this term, and we can leave those aspects to them. That there is no propensity to violence (or any other specific emotional load) in identity as such, and that identity and difference can be played out in quite different ways, is illustrated by Horstmann’s contribution on Southern Thailand. While the conflict in Patani has developed into a most violent one in which local Buddhists are pitted against local Muslims, ritual exchange based on cultural tradition (and ancestor worship, in particular) takes place 100 miles north of Patani in the Songkhla Lake region. Horstmann’s contribution also demonstrates the occasional, somewhat paradoxical, intertwining of identity and difference. In the multi-confessional communities, Ban Tamot and Ban Hua Chang, world religion is indigenized by the agency of the villagers, and in turn, Southern Thai culture adapts certain elements from world religion.

In a way that is reminiscent of Tule’s description of Keo society in Flores, eastern Indonesia (Tule 2004), the religious systems of southern Thailand are shaped by their interaction, which also links them to deeply-rooted local beliefs. Here, Buddhism and Islam share a cosmology, based on the continuing relationship of the living and the dead, and common values, which allow for inter-religious marriage and conversion from one religion to the other. Conversion to Islam is, however, a formal affair, while conversion to Buddhism does not require any formal ritual.

The refugee crisis of 2015, in which Muslims from Myanmar fled by boat to Malaysia and Indonesia or perished attempting to do so, shows that some Southeast Asian states have become identified with the religions dominant in them – Myanmar and Thailand with Buddhism, Malaysia and Indonesia with Islam – no matter how much modernist, secular-minded elites and human rights champions within these states and world-wide may regret such an identification.

From Ethnic Dyads to Multi-Ethnic Empires

Further considerations of a rather fundamental nature are raised by the next contribution (Schlee), which compares three interethnic dyads: Anywaa and Nuer in Ethiopia, Maasai and Kamba in Kenya, and Buryat/Evenki in the Russian Federation. These examples illustrate a third form of interaction, beyond hostility or peaceful coexistence, namely, uneasy coexistence with limited interaction. In her chapter, discussed briefly above, Pfaff-Czarnecka also emphasizes the importance of limited interaction and mere coexistence in certain settings. She

discusses precautions showing ‘that rules of maintaining distance can make coexistence of people of different status groups possible’. From Mutie (2003, 2013),²¹ Schlee’s source on relations between the Maasai and Kamba, we now learn that in this setting as well, where, in contrast to Nepal, integration into a vertical hierarchy is not the issue, social distance and mere coexistence play significant roles. Cultural difference need not serve either to justify rejection or hostility or to provide the basis for complementarity and peaceful interaction. It can also be left to stand by itself: One can agree to be different, one can limit interaction to certain nodal points, and one can live alongside others looking most of the time the other way.

The final chapter, again by Schlee, takes the reader back to some of the regions (Central Asia/Turkey) already visited by Kaiser (2001) and Hansen and Kaiser in this volume. But the chapter has an even wider scope, including India and parts of Africa, and refers to earlier historical eras. While Hansen and Kaiser’s focus is on the time since the fall of socialism, when different parts of the world opened up to each other and some identifications widened or were even globalized, this chapter discusses social formations which precede both socialism and modern nationalism. It goes back all the way to Tamerlane and Chinggis Khan and draws a line from there to later, early modern and modern forms of rule. It looks at how difference and sameness are handled in a specific political formation, namely empires. Empires can be studied in their interconnection in history. The Qipchak Uzbeks, for example, played a role in Tamerlane’s empire and in the Moghul Empire in India; what is more, they were an important ethnic component of the Mameluks in Egypt. And of course there are the ubiquitous British, who changed roles over time, acting first as allies and then as mercenaries, advisors or vassals of local rulers, and, finally, as the rulers of these rulers. Empires succeed each other in history, they provide models for each other, or they compete with each other and make war; or they do all of this at the same time. Apart from that, they can, to a degree, be treated as separate cases and compared. The question of how empires – or, more generally, systems of rule – are derived and learn from their predecessors is hardly touched here; rather, it must remain a presumably inexhaustible topic for future research. Schlee focuses, instead, on the ways in which empires exploit sameness and difference as structural principles, with the aim of specifying particular types and contributing to the development of a typology.

What all empires share, almost like a defining feature, is that they are ethnically heterogeneous. Building on cultural homogeneity or wishing to bring about such homogeneity is a characteristic of the nation-state, not necessarily of the empire. So, obviously, handling difference is a necessary skill for empire builders. Rhetorically, difference is a justification for empire; and, from a system perspective, difference is the glue that keeps empires together. But sameness also plays a role. A rather pervasive pattern seems to be that homogenizing forces are at work

in creating a ruling stratum, while the groups over whom the rule extends have to differ from the rulers and may differ from each other too.

Some of the questions posed in Schlee's chapter on 'Identification with the State and Identifications by the State' – namely 'who is the state?', 'who identifies with the state?', 'in whose interest does the state act?' – can also be addressed to empires. Some of the earlier nomadic empires of the Eurasian steppe may have been purely predatory. Every summer, armies went from oasis to oasis and from city to city, demanding tribute. Tribute was paid to avert destruction. The tax payers (if that is the appropriate term at this low level of regularity and regulation) had no reason to identify with such predatory empires except in the rhetoric of submission. Presumably, such states or empires, in terms of identification, recruitment, exclusion and inclusion, have closely followed the logic of the 'gang of robbers' model (Tilly 1985; Schlee 2008a: 26).

When it comes to the colonial empires of European powers, there is more than one additional twist to the question 'who is the state?'. In the early phase of colonialism, private companies such as the Dutch East India Company, the British East India Company, the British South Africa Company, and the Niger Company²² collected taxes and waged war just like states. This 'early phase' cannot be fixed on a global timescale. British colonialism, for example, was over in much of North America before it reached its peak in India and from there expanded to East Africa. These companies, which are characteristic of the early phase, often legitimized their activities by acting on behalf, by claiming to act on behalf, or by being allies, of local rulers. The British East India Company, for example, maintained the fiction of being agents and tax-collectors of the Moghul Empire. In fact, as time progressed, local rulers, only nominally vassals of the Grand Moghul, often were just puppets of Company rule. And, later, the Grand Moghul suffered the same fate. So, in fact, statehood was vested in the Company, not in the empty shells of Moghul rule.

To stay with the British example: what was the relationship between 'The Company' and Britain? The Company was licensed by the government. That is the formal aspect. But did it act on behalf and in the interest of the government? (A recursive question, because one can continue the line of questions by asking on whose behalf the government acted.) Government, in Britain, was in the hands of the aristocracy. Well into the phase of industrialization and global political and commercial expansion, what counted for both status and power in England was land (agricultural estates in England) and titles. The company agents who made quick money in India had a problem with their social identity. They desperately wanted to belong to this aristocracy, and this aristocracy vehemently (to the extent that English aristocrats can be vehement) rejected them as *nouveaux riches* who had acquired their fortunes by dubious means. (From the aristocratic perspective, proper wealth was based on chasing English farmers off their land to acquire huge estates, not by causing famines in India by over-taxation

of Indian peasants or by acquiring war spoils there at the expense of their Indian equivalents, the Indian nobility.) So, the ‘nabobs’, the company agents who had become rich in India, tried to invest their fortunes in land in England, in buying titles and marrying into good families.

An ‘agent’ is expected to act in the interest of his ‘principal’ (Coleman 1990: 145–74). Did the Company agents act in the interest of the Company? One can ask the same set of questions of a state-like company (one that wages wars and collects taxes) as one can of the state: who was the Company? That is, from which parts of the population were the Company personnel recruited? With whom did the Company identify? Who identifies with the Company? Who were the allies of the Company, that is, who was outside of the Company but engaged in reciprocal relations with it?

Rather than going through these questions one by one, we may refer the reader to the work of historians (Darwin 2013; Dirks 2006; Fergusson 2004; Wild 2001). In the present context, it may suffice to say that there were problems of identification and divergence of interests between the personnel of the Company and its shareholders, because the former tended to declare the best business as their private business and to view the lavish gifts from Indian rulers, meant to grease their relationship with the Company, as private possessions. Company interests were not necessarily British interests. The military adventures of the Company were a potential drain on the state budget, because they might lead to the military involvement of the Crown. In terms of class, the nabobs were as alien to the working class²³ as they were to the aristocracy and to those parts of the middle classes that sided with the missionaries in their endeavour to Christianize the ‘pagans’ and to ‘lift’ them to higher levels of humanity – which is quite a different agenda from instrumentalizing differences in order to justify and implement the rule of the British over the Indians. For the Company and its officers, issues of identification were as complex in Britain as they were in India.

In his contribution to this volume, however, Schlee focuses on the inter-ethnic relationships between rulers and the ruled in conquered territories, and leaves problems of identification in colonial ‘motherlands’ across the sea largely aside.

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Notes

1. I use this phrase as a combined reference to ‘genocide’, ‘ethnic cleansing’, killings of religious dissenters and all forms of mass violence aimed at producing a more homogenous social setting along ethnic or religious lines of identification, mostly more similar to the perpetrators of such mass violence.
2. Cohesion (which evokes solidarities and togetherness) is not the same thing as integration. Here, we use ‘integration’ not in the sense of politicians or social workers who want to achieve something and for whom the term is laden with a positive value, but in the sense of system theory. When something becomes an element of a system, it is integrated into that system. Much of our work on how humans aggregate has had a focus on identification and alliances (e.g. Schlee 2008a; Eidson et al. 2017), and is all about agency and choice. People adopt, foreground or deny one or the other collective identity in response to incentives. In other words, we have frequently taken the individual as the starting point of our analysis. In the present volume, we start more often from larger aggregates. For example, how do empires, in contrast to nation-states, comprise and link the parts which constitute them? This has nothing to do with deep convictions or loyalty to schools of thought. We have not converted from *Handlungstheorie* to *Systemtheorie*. We simply hope that changes of perspectives and combinations of perspective might offer new insights. Sometimes, the choice between individuals or systems or larger aggregates as a starting point is determined by our sources. Often historical or ethnographic accounts do not tell us a lot about individuals, in particular ordinary individuals.
3. Some anthropologists feel they are doing this. By becoming fluent in another language and acquiring the habits of one’s surroundings one can be accepted by a group as one of them. People might make great and very generous efforts to explain away the fact that the anthropologist still looks different, in terms of pigmentation or whatever it may be. As a former stranger one may even have had to think more about ‘culture’ as one learns it, and one may be able to explain it in ways the people who have grown up in it and acquired it through early habituation have never thought about but find quite interesting. Other anthropologists prefer to mystify what they study and present ‘culture’ as something one can never really penetrate unless one has grown up in it. These different attitudes may correlate with linguistic skills and other kinds of intellectual performance.
4. For a critique of relativism, see Jarvie (1984).
5. A hobby fisherwoman among the commentators, who has harmed many worms in her life by using them as bait, warns me against using ‘wormishness’, because not all worms or worm segments recover from such an injury and because there are differences among various worm species. Anthropologists always find exceptions, as does this commentator. Nevertheless, with these qualifications, the worm might be allowed to stand as an example of the segmentary principle.
6. Zitelmann (1999) explores some of the ideological load of this concept.
7. The difficulties include defining what is kept together (society, a particular society, within which limits?), the definition of a coherent or undisrupted (ideal) state of such an entity as a backdrop against which disruptive forces can be identified, the identification of forces of cohesion/disruption, and the measurement of cohesion and disruption (the effects of these forces).
8. See Harris (1974) for an example.
9. Some authors regard self-reflection as the specific feature which makes us human. In practice, some people are clearer and more explicit about their motivations than others.

10. Cf., Aga Khan Development Network. (Retrieved 24 April 2013 from www.akdn.org.)
11. See Rothman (2000) for a theory that makes a basic distinction between identity-based conflicts and resource- or interest-based ones and advocates different strategies for dealing with each. See Schlee (2009) for a critique of this kind of reasoning.
12. Note that 'theories' is used here in a rather value-free way. We do not discuss whether the statements in question need to meet a standard of scholarlyness to deserve the name 'theory'.
13. To balance the picture, the reciprocal element, the Catholic dislike of Protestants, also needs to be voiced. A German woman from the Catholic south once told me how, many years ago, she wanted to familiarize her father with her intention to marry her present husband, an Arab. It took her father some time to swallow that his future son-in-law was an Arab, but he managed to contain himself. He expected him to be a Muslim and was about to accept even that with a sigh. He only blew his top when his daughter told him that the young man was a Lutheran. 'How dare you!'
14. See Schlee (2008a: 10) for an explanation of the term 'meta-ethnic'.
15. Nigel Rapport (2012), in a volume which is pertinent to our subject because it also deals with narrower and wider identifications, speaks about the 'cosmopolitan project' both in politics and in academia, and he leaves no doubt that cosmopolitanism is also his project. The present author shares the political sympathies of Rapport, but this volume does not have a 'project' in that sense. It wants to describe the world as it is, without having to take a moral position at every junction. This attitude does not exclude the hope that a better understanding of how things are interconnected may also be of help in changing them. The normative element in Rapport's writing is justified, and anthropology does have a role in setting political aims and making moral judgements; but these things are not in the foreground of our present exercise. Here, we want to explain empirical givens rather than critiquing them.
16. 'Hindu caste is based on fundamentally different presuppositions from individualistic Western philosophy and cannot be understood if viewed through Western Eyes' (Banton 1992: 74).
17. Münster's book is quite unusual as it combines a 'village study' with a 'postcolonial' perspective, since the two normally stand for quite different fashions and periods in the writings about India. See Berger (2012) for a history of these fashions.
18. For collections on Fulbe and their integration into the market and wider society, see Bourgeot (1999), Botte, Boutrais and Schmitz (1999), Diallo and Schlee (2000).
19. For a critique of Furnivall, see Banton (2015: 73f).
20. Other costs of identification (identity work, investing in identity), which are sometimes monetary, may include the acquisition of formal qualifications or status symbols, investments in building up a reputation or getting rid of a negative identification, or research into the identity claims of others to ascertain or dismantle them, to cite only a few examples.
21. Pius Mutie sadly passed away on 23 October 2013 at the age of only 45 years.
22. The British East India Company, modelled after the Dutch East India Company, seems to have served as a model for the later establishment of such companies in Africa (Fergusson 2004: 228).
23. Fergusson (2004: 283) summarizes sources contemporary with the high time of British Imperialism, the turn of the twentieth century, as describing Imperialism as 'a rip-off: paid for by British taxpayers, fought for by British soldiers', it benefitted 'only a tiny elite of fat-cat-millionaires'.