

1 Introduction

1.1 Problem Statement, Key Questions, and Objectives

Throughout history, human societies have repeatedly established structures that privilege certain individuals and groups within their specific contexts, while marginalizing or oppressing others. From the slave-owning societies of ancient China, Egypt, Babylon, and Rome to the complex social stratifications of contemporary times and today's globalized world, the practice of sorting and classifying people into differently valued categories based on group affiliation appears to be a persistent feature of human social organization. These practices, which are referred to as human differentiation, vary considerably depending on the historical period and geographic location under consideration. Such affiliations, structures, and hierarchies are frequently taken for granted. On a global scale, this unquestioned normality is evidenced by the common practice of classifying and subsequently treating people according to hierarchical schemes. For example, from a Western perspective, the term "Third World" is still typically used to refer to an "underdeveloped world," where the inhabitants are often regarded as "backward", and the societies are seen as failing to reach a state that is considered "normal" or "appropriate." At the local level, human differentiation is expressed through other forms of asymmetry, which typically result in binary and hierarchically structured groups of people. These differentiations, which encompass social, economic, ethnic, and gender-specific distinctions, are deeply embedded in social structures and significantly impact coexistence. The resulting group formations and attributions play a crucial role in perpetuating existing power relations and influencing access to basic resources, rights, and opportunities. This book analyses the manifold manifestations of differentiation practices and their culturally coded social orders. This study conceptualizes two distinct regimes of orders of difference, each operating with specific logics of cultural coding to categorize, hierarchize, and control human differentiation. The initial regime is founded upon primordial coding, which is defined by binary structures and is presumed to be "natural" in its distinctions. The second regime, marked by neoliberal encodings, reflects the neoliberal agenda and its inherent policies and narratives, which introduce other

dimensions of social hierarchization and discrimination. The regimes of orders of difference serve to illustrate the profound intricacy of the mechanisms that result in the exclusion or disadvantage of individuals on the basis of perceived and/or group-based differences. These socio-techniques demonstrate that the roots of discrimination are deeply embedded in the fundamental structures and narratives of a society, manifesting across various contexts. Despite the diversity of human differentiation practices, they all share a common feature: the social and cultural construction of certain individuals as “the others.” This construction functions as a basis for intolerance, prejudice, and discrimination and can lead to a comprehensive system of social oppression. Furthermore, it can precipitate armed conflicts, wars, pervasive displacements of populations, mass killings, and even genocides. Despite the adoption of the UN Charter of Human Rights in the aftermath of the Second World War, instances of violent conflict and the implementation of policies that flagrantly contravene the principles of human rights continue to persist. This has resulted in a state of perpetual warfare, the ascendancy of authoritarian and dictatorial regimes, and a multitude of individuals who have been displaced and disenfranchised. Furthermore, Western societies demonstrate a pervasive culture of indifference towards individuals from underdeveloped regions, particularly the Middle East and vast portions of Africa. These regions have been engaged in geopolitical conflicts for at least 150 years, largely due to the exploitation of their natural resources, especially fossil fuels. Notwithstanding the fact that the prosperity and associated privileges of the West are largely based on this exploitation, there is a pervasive lack of awareness regarding the direct link between so-called Western progress and the resulting displacement, environmental and climate damage, and the systematic destabilization of the exploited regions. This spectrum of indifference is deeply rooted in the social and emotional capacities of geopolitically privileged collectives and significantly influences perceptions of what constitutes “normal.” Such attitudes not only reinforce internal social divisions but also sustain global power structures by providing them with a veneer of legitimacy through the use of specific narratives. In light of these considerations, the cognitive dissonance resulting from dependence on fossil fuels and adherence to a lifestyle that further reinforces this dependence through excess and waste requires a more critical and honest examination of these contexts. It is thus imperative to undertake a conscious examination and questioning of the culturally shaped schemas of indifference that are deeply ingrained in discourses, practices, and institutions. Such reflection is vital for grasping the intricate interconnections between power, culture, and identity, and is indispensable for formulating efficacious strategies to surmount inequalities and discrimination. The growing number of individuals who are perceived as “other” and the increase in cases of discrimination indicate the necessity for a critical reevaluation and transformation of our deeply entrenched patterns of perception and behavior. Consequently, despite their diversity and divergence,

the populations of Western democracies are confronted with a number of pressing issues in the 21st century:

- *What forms does human differentiation currently take, and for what specific reasons does it occur?*
- *What specific cultural codes and logics underlie these differentiations?*
- *On what cognitive, emotional, and physical foundations are these human differentiations based?*

The present work explores the pertinence of these guiding questions within the German context. In light of these guiding questions, it becomes evident that the current practices of human differentiation are in fundamental conflict with the self-image of liberal-democratic systems. This self-image, which places emphasis on individual freedom and human rights on the global stage, particularly in the context of the nation-state, is predicated on the assumption that ethnic, religious, cultural, and national differences are irrelevant to one's own identity. However, the social realities in many Western societies starkly contrast with this ideal, especially when established privileges are under threat. The most evident manifestations of privilege are currently linked to the possession of certain citizenships that offer privileged living standards and opportunities, primarily in affluent Western countries. The inherent contradictions in approaches to human differentiation give rise to tensions that prompt profound inquiries into the coherence and efficacy of democratic systems, as well as the nature of solidarity, or its absence. Therefore, the book addresses not only the question of selective access to fundamental human rights, but also the specific conditions of their provision and numerous neglected aspects of these systematized demarcation and categorization processes. These overlooked aspects are closely intertwined with emotional, neurobiological, and sociocultural mechanisms through which groups emerge, define themselves in a distinction against other groups, and find recognition for both themselves and the other group by being deemed "recognizable" through special coding. It is a fundamental tenet of social systems that boundaries and regulations are established, particularly in regard to questions of inclusion and exclusion. This is done in order to preserve and consolidate the specific structure of the social order on which they are imposed. The methods by which humans differentiate themselves may vary depending on the context and change over time, but they are not arbitrary. Rather, they are imbued with particular meanings that contribute to reproducing the prevailing normative orders. The function of these practices extends beyond the mere classification and categorization of individuals within social systems. They are, in fact, crucial for the maintenance and reinforcement of existing power structures and relational dynamics. Moreover, these differentiation practices reflect cultural, economic, and political dynamics that are deeply entrenched in society. The apparent contradic-

tion is that they are an essential component of social cohesion and identity, whilst simultaneously representing a source of social tension and conflict. This renders the discussion of the topic particularly challenging from a radically self-reflexive perspective. In liberal societies, the practices and justifications that accompany the demarcation and sorting of individuals must be carefully balanced to avoid jeopardizing the democratic foundations and core values of liberalism. This challenge represents a normative paradox inherent to the triad of freedom, equality, and security. Achieving a balance that supports individual freedoms and equality while ensuring collective security is a complex endeavor. A profound comprehension of the historical, cultural, and emotional influences that inform our notions of belonging and otherness is vital for a critical examination of patterns of differentiation and discrimination. It forms a foundation for the creation of future pathways that will lead to more democratic communities. A more profound comprehension of the interrelations between political sentiments and the categorization of individuals as “other” is contingent upon the acknowledgment of the pivotal role played by group dynamics and identities. Group identities are frequently constructed within a context that is profoundly emotionally charged and characterized by an ideological pursuit of utopian forms of unrestricted recognition. The normative program inherent in this concept places significant emphasis on central values such as tolerance, equality, and inclusion. It suggests that actively recognizing and appreciating diversity can facilitate the creation of an inclusive environment where individuals can freely develop their identities. Furthermore, the normative program aims to cultivate a heightened sense of belonging and to facilitate social cohesion founded upon mutual respect. However, this ideological stance can result in the obscuration or underestimation of an inherent contradiction when an idealized notion of pluralism and multiculturalism is advocated. Such perspectives on society may prove inadequate in addressing the challenges and essential prerequisites for transforming diversity into genuine social cohesion. The failure to consider the multifaceted nature of social issues carries the risk of promoting a simplified and often unrealistic view of social issues, thereby intensifying the underlying conflicts. This book is an investigation and analysis of the various mechanisms that employ socially and culturally defined notions of “normality” and “deviance” to influence the reproduction of patterns of inclusion and exclusion within social groups. Both discursive and performative means are employed to evoke feelings of belonging, solidarity, and conformity. The role of culture and emotions in this process is pivotal, functioning as indispensable instruments for regulating group-based intentions. This study pays particular attention to culturally coded schemas that contribute to the establishment and maintenance of specific social orders by influencing particular emotions. These emotional elicitation schemas also facilitate the labeling and segregation of groups that are mistakenly perceived as homogeneous, thereby perpetuating social structures of inequality and existing power

dynamics. A novel aspect of this work is the development of a theoretical framework that conceptualizes affective, cognitive, and bodily schemata as interconnected elements. These schemata are integrated into the systemic and non-linear structure of social systems by means of the latest research on social cognition and drawing from sociocybernetics, thereby opening new perspectives. An analysis of these processes reveals the complex ways in which culture and emotions interact to construct and reinforce social realities. An examination of the ways in which cultural norms and emotional responses influence perceptions of group membership and exclusion facilitates a more profound comprehension of the intricacies of social interactions. This understanding is crucial for recognizing the subtle yet powerful forces that underpin the seemingly natural boundaries between “us” and “them.” The emphasis on group dynamics and the subsequent enhancement of culturally defined schemata within social systems of liberal societies constitutes a fundamental element of the theoretical frameworks employed to examine hierarchies and mechanisms of differentiation.

The systemic-anthropological approach, as outlined here, endeavors to develop a differentiated understanding of freedom within the framework of analyzing cultural coding practices and human differentiation shaped by regimes of orders of difference. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to consider not only the social, cultural, geopolitical, and historical surface structures of social systems, but also to delve into the psychological, neurobiological, evolutionary-psychological, and group-based structures that sculpt individual identities. This approach represents an innovative integration of psychological anthropology with systems theory, whereby the concept of freedom is discussed in a transpersonal context and within the framework of a complex social system. This social system reflects the actual impact of global contexts on society and the individual, taking into account the intricacy of cultural coding practices and the resulting human differentiation. The argument put forth is that individual and collective freedoms within the regimes of difference delineated by cultural codes cannot be regarded as if they were isolated phenomena. Rather, they are inextricably linked with a complex network of social, economic, and political forces shaped by global interactions and the dynamics of cultural coding. By integrating the perspectives of psychological anthropology and systems theory, the multiple levels and dimensions of differentiation and freedom are examined. This approach allows for a more profound examination of the mechanisms that shape and negotiate cultural identities and affiliations, as well as the challenges that arise in the pursuit of social justice and equality. To this end, the concept of two parallel regimes of ordering difference is introduced: the primordial and the neoliberal coded regimes. Together with their associated narratives and discursive logics, both are sustained neuroculturally through specific forms of cognitive-affective-bodily schemata. These schemata function similarly to conditioning and encompass cognitive, emotional, and physical dimensions. The

interplay between cultural codings—whether primordial or neoliberal—and the internalization of these contents, considered as a process of subjectivation, interacts with geopolitical and economic policies aimed at conditioning and controlling individuals and groups through specific practices of differentiation, classification, and hierarchization according to their codings. The intertwining of these elements forms the foundation of the present analysis and provides insights into the complex mechanisms that shape the construction of social realities. This work emphasizes the importance of geopolitical and hegemonic dynamics in shaping processes of differentiation. It aims to explore the complex mechanisms that lead to the categorization and social positioning of people, thereby regulating inclusion and exclusion within social structures from a transdisciplinary perspective.

1.2 Contribution and Significance

This study takes a transdisciplinary approach, which helps bridge the gap between theories of differentiation practices as espoused by natural science and cultural studies and recent developments in systems theory. Furthermore, insights from psychological anthropology are connected to these theoretical frameworks. This integration allows for a comprehensive analysis of the complexity of human differentiation practices by considering both the structural aspects of contemporary societies and the deeply embedded evolutionary-anthropological, biopsychological, sociocultural, and geopolitical dynamics that provide the foundation for and continuously shape these structures. The incorporation of current research findings on social cognition, based on the so-called 4e's (Embodied, Embedded, Enactive, and Extended), facilitates a deeper understanding of how individuals perceive, interpret, and act within their social world through comprehensively conceived schemata. Enriched by insights from social psychology and evolutionary anthropology, this approach adds crucial dimensions to the analysis of human differentiation. At the core of this approach is the nuanced consideration of schemata, which are no longer understood as exclusively psychological constructs or cognitive structures. Instead, they are conceptualized within a holistic framework that integrates diverse theories and approaches from the fields of cognition, emotion, physiology, neurobiology, social systems, and geopolitical constellations. Cultural codes are regarded as pervasive mechanisms that operate across the intricate levels of social systems. The integration of evolutionary-biological and psychological-anthropological frameworks into the conceptualization of schemas of difference facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the persistence of specific patterns of thought and injustices. This comprehensive perspective identifies the significant role of cultural and biological factors in the persistence of discriminatory practices and inequality. These intricate interactions between individual and collective

experiences, social norms and values, and historical and geopolitical influences are manifested through cultural codes that exert a profound influence on both individual and collective perception and behavior. This innovative heuristic allows for a comprehensive understanding of the deep structures of social differentiation processes by delineating the multiple forces that shape and influence individual and collective behavior, while also addressing existing gaps in theories and approaches to human differentiation.

While this book shares an interest in processes of human differentiation with sociological approaches such as Stefan Hirschauer's theory of human differentiation (Hirschauer 2014; 2021; 2023; Hirschauer and Terjung 2024), it departs from them in several decisive respects. Hirschauer's framework offers a finely grained reconstruction of the social, linguistic, material, and institutional practices through which human categories are produced, stabilized, and hierarchized. Its analytical strength lies in the detailed description of differentiation as an enacted social process, closely aligned with ethnographic and microsociological observation. The approach developed here, by contrast, is situated within a socio-cybernetic and anthropological framework that explicitly extends beyond the level of observable practices and classificatory regimes. Rather than asking primarily how differentiation is enacted, this study addresses the question of why processes of human differentiation exhibit such remarkable stability, recurrence, and resistance to normative intervention across social contexts and historical periods. To account for this persistence, the analysis foregrounds cognitively, affectively, and bodily operative schemata that structure perception, evaluation, and social orientation prior to, alongside, and beneath explicit discursive and institutional categorizations. Drawing on transdisciplinary insights from cognitive science, social psychology, neurobiology, and evolutionary research, the book conceptualizes human differentiation as anchored not only in social orders, but also in embodied modes of perception, affective salience, and cognitive economies of attention and categorization. In doing so, it opens an explanatory avenue that shifts the analytical focus from situational enactment to the underlying conditions of persistence. These cognitively-affective and bodily schemata do not determine differentiation in a reductionist sense, nor do they replace sociological accounts of classification, boundary-making, and segregation. Rather, they function as stabilizing conditions that render social differentiation plausible, repeatable, and resilient, even in contexts that formally promote equality or inclusion. From this perspective, human differentiation emerges as the outcome of recursive couplings between social structures and relatively stable perceptual-affective dispositions. The contribution of this book therefore lies less in refining typologies of social differentiation than in explaining their robustness and cross-contextual recurrence. By integrating socio-cybernetic, anthropological, and cognitive-affective perspectives, the analysis advances an explanatory level that remains largely implicit in practice-oriented and ethnographically grounded theories of human differentiation.

By considering various axes of differentiation as foundational elements in the examination of social differentiation processes within complex social systems, this approach introduces two concurrent regimes of difference orders—the neoliberal and the primordial—each operating according to its own logic. These regimes facilitate the analysis of the constitution and maintenance of power and domination relations through differentiated coding practices. While the neoliberal-coded orders of difference emphasize the mechanisms of economic policy influences, the primordially coded orders focus on essentialist-based categories. The interweaving of these regimes in contemporary society sheds light on intricate interactions and overlaps that supplement existing intersectional models, thus making a significant contribution to a more profound comprehension of the mechanisms of human differentiation. This approach is predicated on the notion that the formation of identification processes in individuals and groups is shaped not only by their social relationships and affiliations (social dimension) but also by the thematic and functional contexts (factual dimension) in which they operate.

This approach integrates considerations of intersectionality with a profound anthropological dimension, resulting from a synthesis of the aforementioned schemata across disciplinary boundaries. Furthermore, an additional temporal dimension is incorporated by considering the impact of historical events and global dynamics on contemporary practices of human differentiation. It is emphasized that the formation of social identities is not only shaped by interpersonal relationships and affiliations but also by content-related, action-related, temporal, and anthropological contexts in which individuals act. By incorporating systems theory perspectives, particularly those pertaining to recent advancements in the field, a nuanced understanding of the information processing mechanisms and communication selection criteria of social systems is achieved. This sociocybernetic approach uncovers the ways in which the construction of social reality is not only shaped by individual and collective identities, but also by the self-referential mechanisms of complex social systems. This system-theoretical perspective broadens the scope of the intersectional framework of analysis by demonstrating how the structural interconnectivity of disparate social systems and their distinctive processes of communication and differentiation contribute to the sustenance and reproduction of power asymmetries. In the course of this, the multidimensionality of human differentiation is emphasized by moving beyond simplistic models to draw a comprehensive picture of social interdependencies and their influence on individuals and groups. Adopting a transdisciplinary approach to human differentiation allows us to challenge traditional perspectives on social complexity. Integrating various dimensions of social complexity and their interactions allows us to gain insight into how they shape both individual and collective experiences.

1.3 Structure and Outline

The structure of this study is methodically arranged in a manner that allows *each principal chapter to address a distinct dimension of human differentiation*, thus facilitating a systematic building upon the insights developed in the preceding chapters. This progressive organization allows for an exhaustive exploration of the myriad factors influencing human differentiation, encompassing foundational biological and psychological elements and extending to more complex social and geopolitical determinants. This approach ensures a nuanced comprehension of the multifaceted nature of human differentiation across a range of disciplines and contexts. The *recurrent examination of fundamental themes* in this volume fulfills two distinct didactic and methodological purposes. Primarily, it aims to deepen the understanding of theoretical concepts. Secondly, it offers students a structured orientation. Given the often perceived complexity of systems theory approaches, their detailed, step-by-step discussion across different chapters allows for a well-founded examination of the respective content. This facilitates comprehension of the interdependencies of human differentiation processes by persistently examining recurrent themes across diverse contexts. The book's didactic presentation renders it a valuable study tool for both advanced readers and students.

Chapter 2 commences with a detailed introduction to the foundational theoretical and conceptual components of the study. This chapter delves into the essential theoretical and conceptual frameworks of contemporary system theory, drawing on the seminal works of Gregory Bateson, Niklas Luhmann, Helmut Willke, and Armin Nassehi. It explores foundational concepts and the latest theoretical developments that elucidate how systems organize and perpetuate themselves. The objective of this chapter is to synthesize these advanced theoretical perspectives to establish a robust analytical framework that will support the exploration of complex social phenomena throughout the book, specifically focusing on the mechanisms of human differentiation. By elucidating and integrating the contributions of Bateson, Luhmann, Willke, and Nassehi, this chapter emphasizes the relevance and utility of system theory in understanding the intricate mechanisms that govern social systems and contribute to human differentiation. Understanding these foundational theories equips readers with critical insights into the structured ways social systems influence behavior and societal norms, providing a deeper comprehension of the continuous processes that shape and justify social order and inequality.

Chapter 3 delves into the evolutionary-anthropological foundations of human differentiation, tracing developments from the emergence of *Homo sapiens* through the impact of cultural selection and the development of complex social systems since the Neolithic period. It incorporates insights from evolutionary anthropology and

psychology, with a particular focus on Michael Tomasello's work on collective intentionality and its influence on social collaboration and group cohesion. The discussion examines how these evolutionary foundations persistently shape social structures and behaviors, drawing attention to the role of ingrained evolutionary traits and cultural practices in shaping contemporary social categorization and differentiation. By integrating biological and cultural evolution, this chapter offers a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms behind social categorization and identity formation. While addressing potential deterministic fallacies, the chapter incorporates the significant role of evolutionary and anthropological foundations in the analysis of human differentiation. This nuanced approach ensures that the evolutionary bases are considered critical yet not deterministic, recognizing the complexity and multifaceted nature of human social behavior and differentiation. This perspective helps in understanding not only the historical context but also the ongoing influence of these foundational aspects on current social dynamics.

Chapter 4 delves into the social psychological underpinnings of group-based emotions and behaviors, analyzing key phenomena such as in-group favoritism and the ostracism of those perceived as outsiders through the lens of the Minimal Group Paradigm. This analysis seeks to uncover how these behaviors surface across diverse social contexts and their consequent effects on social cohesion and conflict. Firmly rooted in social psychology, and particularly informed by the seminal work of John T. Jost, the chapter offers an in-depth exploration of collective system justification theory, previously introduced in Chapter 2. This theory is vital for deciphering the psychological mechanisms that underpin and amplify group-based identities and social differentiation, providing a critical lens through which to view the justification and maintenance of systemic inequalities. The primary aim of this chapter is to shed light on how psychological theories profoundly shape our understanding of group dynamics and enhance our grasp of social inequalities. The chapter employs a variety of theoretical frameworks to illustrate the significant influence of social psychological processes on individual and collective behaviors within social groups. It is grounded in well-established psychological theories and emphasizes the crucial role of group emotions and behaviors in shaping social structures. Furthermore, it discusses the psychological foundations that propel group cohesion and conflict, setting the stage for subsequent discussions on strategic interventions and policies designed to address and alleviate social inequalities.

Chapter 5 makes an excursion into the field of neurobiology, wherein it presents a number of significant findings and theories that are indispensable for a comprehensive understanding of human differentiation. It explores the neurobiological foundations that shape human behavior and social interactions, which are crucial for comprehending the multifaceted forms of human differentiation. The chapter intro-

duces significant insights from neurobiology, demonstrating how these biological processes influence social behavior. By incorporating a neurobiological perspective, this chapter enhances the discussion traditionally dominated by social and cultural analyses, offering a more comprehensive view of the mechanisms driving human differentiation. The theoretical foundation of this chapter is heavily informed by the pioneering work of Jaak Panksepp, who identified key neurobiological mechanisms underlying emotional responses associated with the brain's reward and punishment systems. Panksepp's research provides vital insights into how these foundational neurochemical processes influence the formation of human groups and the establishment of social bonds and behaviors. His contributions to affective neuroscience are critical for understanding the emotional systems that significantly impact social bonding and behaviors, pivotal for the nuanced understanding of group identities and social structures. The purpose of this chapter is to present a comprehensive view of the biological bases of human behavior and social interactions, crucial for fully understanding the processes of social categorization and identity formation. This exploration enhances the interdisciplinary approach of the book and lays the groundwork for further discussions that repeatedly draw on the mechanisms of neurochemical reward and punishment.

Chapter 6 analyzes the complex interplay between social cognition, emotions, and affective responses that shape human differentiation, introducing the concept of schemata as autopoietic generators of meaning. Schemata integrate sociocultural, affective, cognitive, and bodily dimensions to form robust frameworks for understanding human behavior and social categorization. This chapter synthesizes the biopsychological and anthropological dimensions previously explored, specifically integrating insights from Chapters 3 to 5, presenting schemata not just as passive structures but as dynamic systems that actively shape and perpetuate the mechanisms of social categorization and identity formation. Special attention is given to binary-coded affective meaning attribution processes (BCAS) within differentiation schemata. These processes are crucial for understanding the automated, often unconscious coding processes that underpin social interactions and judgments, setting the stage for a deeper exploration of these themes in subsequent chapters. Drawing on the works of thinkers like Shaun Gallagher, Tobias Schlicht, and Jaak Panksepp, as well as Gregory Bateson, the chapter discusses how cognitive processes are inherently influenced by social interactions and cultural contexts. It illustrates how schemata are shaped by and continue to shape these interactions, reinforcing or challenging existing social structures and identities. The chapter serves as a critical juncture in the book, linking the theoretical discussions of schemata with broader social and cultural dynamics. It provides a detailed examination of how individual and collective identities are shaped and maintained through complex interactions between biological, psychological, and cultural forces. This discussion sets the stage

for exploring specific instances of human differentiation and analyzing the systemic structures that reinforce such distinctions in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 7 investigates the so-called macrosocial anthropological constants, which are enduring patterns in human history and social organization specific to modern humans since the Neolithic era. Macrosocial anthropological constants concern social patterns of dominance, organization, and resource security. The chapter explores how they have been shaped and reshaped by cultural codings and social practices over time, emphasizing that their applicability and manifestations are closely linked to the development of complex social systems since the Neolithic era. Macrosocial anthropological constants illuminate the historical and cultural origins of social differentiation patterns and help understand how long-term social, economic, and political dynamics form the basis for current forms of human differentiation. They enable a profound analysis of the mechanisms that shape and sustain social identities and hierarchies. This chapter focuses on macrosocial anthropological constants and reflects universal human behaviors that have been adapted and modified by specific cultural codes and social practices over time. By integrating insights from cultural anthropology, based on the work of Christoph Antweiler, the chapter investigates the universality and variability of these patterns. Antweiler's approaches, which explain how human societies organize and reorganize around certain key constants, provide an essential framework for analyzing the mechanisms of human differentiation. The examination of these constants deepens our understanding of how deeply ingrained social structures and practices influence contemporary challenges of human differentiation, including social stratification and inequality. This analysis paves the way for further discussions on the influence of these constants in contemporary societies, particularly in the context of global asymmetries.

Chapter 8 scrutinizes the intricate processes through which specific semantics and lines of difference are strategically encoded within social systems. It examines how signs acquire meanings and how distinct coding logics delineate these lines, with a particular emphasis on the distinctions between primordial and neoliberal coding. This chapter also explores the impacts of these codings through autopoietic processes and entropy minimization, emphasizing how cultural codes shape social identities and organizational structures by conditioning patterns social and cultural expectations, which are understood as subjectivation. Drawing on poststructuralist approaches by thinkers such as Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, and Umberto Eco, this chapter discusses how meanings are constructed and disseminated within cultures, profoundly influencing identity formation and the architecture of social structures. This analysis provides deep insights into the role of cultural coding in both sustaining and transforming social orders.

Chapter 9 builds upon the insights from previous chapters to further enrich the intersectional perspective by analyzing two distinct regimes of difference, each defined by its own logic and historical context. This chapter integrates and deepens the exploration of human differentiation discussed earlier, enhancing our understanding of the complexities and overlaps within intersectional practices of differentiation. It specifically emphasizes the crucial roles of autopoietic schemata and subjectivation in reproducing social inequalities through sociotechniques, with a particular focus on the influence of neoliberal policies that drive the implementation of subjectifying practices, including systemic indebtedness and the penalization of poverty. This analytical approach moves beyond traditional categories of identity to expose the foundational mechanisms that reinforce societal divisions. Drawing on the theoretical contributions of Patricia Hill-Collins, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, and Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, the chapter offers a detailed examination of complex social hierarchies and their intersections. It provides a thorough understanding of how various regimes of difference operate within the social structures of liberal democracies, focusing particularly on Germany, and how these structures are both sustained and contested.

Chapter 10 explicitly integrates geopolitical and hegemonic dimensions to critically examine how global asymmetries and power structures influence human differentiation and social inequalities. This chapter delves into historical contexts such as decolonization wars, the rise of US hegemony, and the strategic use of resources like oil, providing a comprehensive backdrop for understanding the influence of global dynamics on social structures. It examines schemas of indifference related to concepts of “freedom,” excessive behavior, and selective recognition, and discusses their profound effects on social identities and differentiation processes. The theoretical framework for this analysis draws significantly on the works of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, whose discussions on geopolitical and economic factors provide critical insights into the mechanisms through which global power dynamics shape human social structures and identities. This chapter aims to illuminate the complex interplay between global political-economic structures and the everyday realities of human social differentiation.

Chapter 11 provides an early, concise summary that critically examines whether diversity functions as an ideology and explores the challenges and contradictions inherent in social integration. It focuses on the ideological blind spots around inequality and discrimination and the resultant calls for recognition that frequently arise within the context of human differentiation. By analyzing how the idealization of diversity can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts in social integration efforts, the chapter probes deep into the limits and potentials of recognition policies within the framework of social differentiation.

Chapter 12 synthesizes the central findings of this work and offers a comprehensive overview of the analyzed concepts and theories. It accentuates how various forms of classification, categorization, and hierarchization of humanity—termed human differentiation—despite their diverse manifestations in different contexts, reveal universal commonalities. These commonalities align with a central theme that emphasizes the interconnected and multidimensional nature of human differentiation in present-day societies. The identified pattern of the five primary domains of human differentiation demonstrates that analyzing these practices within the context of social inequalities, through the integrative combination of various perspectives and approaches within a systemic-anthropological framework, enables a profound and nuanced understanding of cultural and social dynamics. These reflections significantly contribute to the debate on the potentials of social integration and recognition. By framing the boundaries, practices, affects, and the narratives that underlie and support these practices not as morally good or bad, but as components of a comprehensive anthropological understanding, a deeper insight into the structural foundations of social inequalities is achieved. This approach considers historical, geopolitical, anthropological, neurobiological, and psychological dimensions of social differentiation. It opens new avenues for analyzing and shaping cultural and social dynamics by deepening the understanding of the overlapping and interacting dimensions of social complexity and the multifaceted nature of human differentiation. This contributes to the development of more nuanced and effective recognition policies and raises awareness of the diverse mechanisms that uphold social inequalities. Ultimately, it becomes evident that the study of human differentiation not only deepens the understanding of the structural foundations of social inequalities but also opens new perspectives for the analysis of cultural and social dynamics. These reflections play a crucial role in the debate on the possibilities and limits of social integration and recognition policies.