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11 Conclusion: differentiation theory and world politics

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For many sociologists, functional differentiation is *the* major characteristic and driving force of modern societies. For many IR theorists, segmentary differentiation and anarchy are *the* major characteristics and the driving force of the modern international system. How can one reconcile these views? One answer is to resort to a levels-of-analysis approach, which can then neatly isolate national societies dominated by functional differentiation and typologize the overarching international society as an anarchical society based on segmentary differentiation. Durkheim's notion of a functionally differentiated society remained limited to national societies (Durkheim, 1988; see Cerny, in this volume); and both Neo-Realism and the English School described the international system as anarchical (Waltz, 1979), specifically as an anarchical society, albeit not a society in the traditional sense because international society was composed of collective entities (states), not individuals (Bull, 1977). The problem with this move is that, with globalization, the inside/outside conceptualization begins to dissolve, making the whole framing of levels less convincing. With globalization or denationalization – that is, the declining significance of national borders for societal transactions – functionally defined systems such as the economy or science easily reach beyond state borders (Zürn, 1998; Held *et al.*, 1999). At the same time, the international political system has still not developed a legitimate monopoly of force and thus remains formally speaking an anarchical society with segmentarily separated political systems. The key question, therefore, is how globalization and functional differentiation relate to each other or, seen from another perspective, whether they are different ways of talking about the same thing. In the latter case, the point of interest is whether or not differentiation theory can provide a more precise and better structured set of theoretical tools for analysis than traditional IR theory. Is globalization best understood as the breakout of functional differentiation from its state cage, and what do we gain by seeing it in that way?

This volume brings together a number of contributions which address this problem. All of these contributions hold in common that IR theory can gain by using concepts associated with differentiation theory. We also believe that sociological theory could gain a lot by exploring IR and IR theory more systematically. The latter is, however, not our primary purpose; we mainly elaborate the value of differentiation theory in understanding International Relations. We aim to shed new light on international relations by asking three sets of questions as identified in the introductory chapter.

1. Classical social theory suggests that one form of differentiation should normally be dominant and that segmentary, stratificatory and functional differentiation can therefore be used to identify fundamental types of social order. The subject matter of international relations suggests, however, that all three basic types of differentiation are strongly in play, and that what matters are the specific mixtures and their interplay (Donnelly, in this volume). For example, one finds segmentary and stratificatory and functional differentiation within the functionally differentiated realm of politics. For international relations, modernity, therefore, cannot just be about the displacement of segmentary and stratificatory by functional differentiation as the dominant social form. Transposing the apparatus of differentiation theory from the subject matter of Sociology to that of International Relations raises the more general questions about the relationship between different forms of differentiation in the global system.
2. Assuming that functional differentiation is in play (dominant or not), what is the relationship of different functionally defined (sub)systems to each other? Are function systems autonomous and equal? Or do some have special features that put them somehow above the others: for example law (as argued for by global constitutionalists), politics (as argued for by realists), economy (as argued for by Marxists)? Is the political system different from others in that it coordinates the different function systems?
3. Since differentiation follows the logic of division in the first place, what is it that integrates a social whole sufficiently for it to be thought of as a whole: a system or a society? This is particularly important for the subject matter of international relations, where it is generally easier to think of the whole as being emergent rather than to be, as in classical Sociology, something pre-existing and primal. Is the integration merely mechanical connectedness? Or is it somehow framed by an ideology or set of values that legitimizes particular forms of differentiation?

In the remainder of this chapter, we seek answers to these three sets of questions and explore the implications of these answers for IR theory.

1 The relationships between different forms of differentiation

Classical sociological theorists were theorists of national societies. Emile Durkheim (1988) and Max Weber (1968b) explicitly limited the concept of functional differentiation to modernizing national societies. Yet, by conceptualizing modernity as a shift from a primacy of stratificatory to a primacy of functional differentiation, even early differentiation theorists implicitly pointed to the inherent limits of the territorial organization of societies. If social organization follows a functional logic, spatial limitations are secondary. They may temporarily hinder the full development of the functional logic, but in the long run they are secondary to the needs of different social systems or subsystems or indeed the interests of the actors working therein. While functional differentiation has featured prominently as a theme from the inception of Sociology as a scientific enterprise, Niklas Luhmann (1982) was the first differentiation theorist who spelled out this shift in its consequences for world society.

Indeed, with the benefit of hindsight one can argue that the Westphalian system always was an unstable construction. Its decline was inscribed in the very principles on which it was based. The anarchical society was built on two organizing principles: first, a segmentary differentiation among territorial units; second, the competition between these territorially defined units. The latter organizing principle, however, undermined the former in the long run. It created a permanent pressure to modernize in order to unleash the forces allowed by functional specialization. Without societal modernization in terms of a continuing specialization of tasks and the division of labour leading to a productive economy, states risked falling behind in the competition. To put it differently, the international system entailed an evolutionary mechanism as envisioned by Waltz (1979), the decisive criterion for long-term success was, however, not military strength, as he argued, but economic productivity and wealth creation. While a militarily strong state like the Soviet Union did not survive, a militarily weak, but economically successful state like Sweden is still part of the system. It is, of course, true that the system still contains many economically weak states. But nowadays all states strive for wealth and at least some do not strive for military strength.

The side-effect of this competition was to undermine states as independent components in this segmentary system. Function systems – economy, science or art – by their very logic do not stop at national boundaries and thus carry within them a tendency to globalize. Or, to put it in a somewhat less deterministic way, those states that allowed their internal functional differentiation to extend beyond their borders were more successful at generating wealth and power than those that did not. As Richard Münch points out (in this volume), Luhmann therefore considers the national limitation of functional differentiation as an arrangement of limited duration, which bears the seed of its dissolution in itself, since evolution tends toward another direction (see also Buzan and Lawson, 2013). To put it bluntly, while the competitive state system that arose in Europe from the fourteenth century on fuelled modernization and functional differentiation, this very same state system has, in turn, been transformed by functional differentiation.

This view is vividly presented in Stephan Stetter's chapter: 'while different forms of differentiation existed in pre-modern eras too, stratificatory differentiation trumped functional differentiation as society's primary form of differentiation' (in this volume: 135). This changes in modernity, where functional differentiation achieves primacy over both segmentary and stratificatory forms of differentiation. While 'primacy' here does not mean that the other forms of differentiation disappear, it means that, where ordering principles which go along with different forms of differentiation clash, functional differentiation will usually prevail. The moment in which functional differentiation finally takes over the role of the dominant form of differentiation at the global level is the current wave of globalization. Phil Cerny (in this volume) describes this process in terms of a disembedding of the nation-state leading to transnational networks that are delimited along different economic sectors. Similarly, Richard Münch (in this volume) sees the control of functional differentiation through territorially defined systems that stand in a segmentary relationship with each other as diminishing in the age of globalization, thus disturbing a centuries-old equilibrium. At the time of writing, its most compelling current illustration is the struggle of the Eurozone governments to stabilize their currency in the face of responses by global financial markets.

This interpretation may be qualified in two respects. First, George Thomas (in this volume) agrees with the observation that functional differentiation became the dominant mode in recent decades. For him, this process does not, however, follow a 'functional or evolutionary logic'; rather the whole process is embedded in the culture of instrumental rationality, which becomes its driver. In fact, all forms of

differentiation are seen to be embedded in rationalized global cultural contexts. In this view, functional differentiation is not the best response to rising complexity, it is a cultural expression of Western dominance. This view accounts for both the co-presence of different forms of differentiation, as well as seemingly paradoxical developments when particularly functional differentiation can be witnessed formally, but not in actual practices (i.e. 'institutional decoupling'). In this sense, an increasing functional differentiation may be witnessed in world society, but it has not done away with segmentary differentiation.

Second, Lora Viola (in this volume) argues that the international system, besides segmentary differentiation, always included elements of hierarchy and inequality. In her words: '[L]ike kinds cannot be constructed without simultaneously constructing unlike kinds. In other words, there is no sovereign equality without sovereign inequality. The system, therefore, is constituted by a continuously reproduced stratification between the included and excluded' (in this volume: 114). Viola thus points to a parallel presence of segmentary and stratificatory differentiation. One may add that the growing relevance of functional differentiation does not necessarily push stratificatory differentiation aside, it seems to coexist with it and can possibly even reinforce it. By establishing and strengthening additional layers of authority, global governance challenges the primacy of segmentary differentiation within the global political system. It also strengthens the element of stratification between levels and a more formalized inequality between states within these institutions. This parallel rise of two different types of differentiation is due to three reasons. First, international institutions exercising authority cannot be legitimated with the 'one-state/one-vote' principle. Differences in size and differences in soft power are increasingly taken into account. Second, international institutions exercising authority include elements of stratificatory differentiation or formalized hierarchy. It is very likely that the most powerful states will take over the top levels in this hierarchy. Third, if international institutions make decisions against the explicitly stated interests of states, implementation becomes precarious and selective. Powerful states can resist implementation pressures much more easily than smaller states (see Viola *et al.*, 2014). Similarly, Phil Cerny (in this volume) sees a new institutionalized inequality emerging as a result of globalization.

All together, the contributions to this volume thus show that the specific form of the interrelationships between different types of differentiation is context-specific. In the age of globalization, this relationship is different from what it was in earlier centuries. This can be depicted as follows.

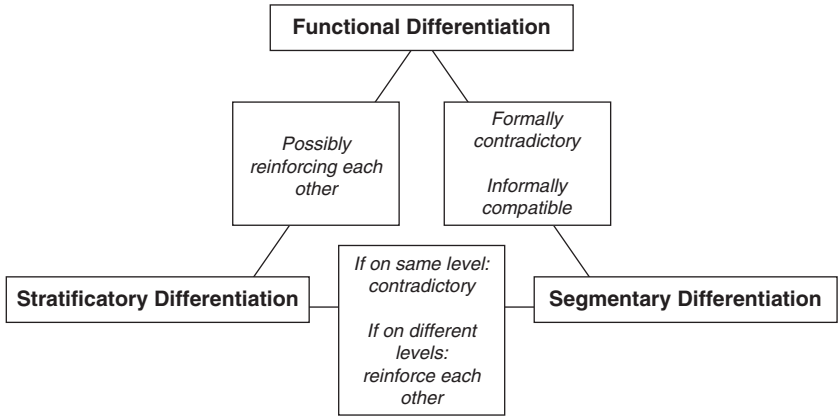

Figure 11.1 The interplay of different forms of differentiation

In overall terms, recent decades unquestionably saw a strengthening of functional differentiation in world society. The growing role of functional differentiation does not, however, preclude the presence or even rise of other forms of differentiation. The interaction between the different modes of differentiation does not follow a zero-sum logic. Against this background, we can identify three interrelationships between different modes of differentiation (see Figure 11.1).

First, *functional and segmentary differentiation* do indeed point to different organizing principles in a society. However, they can certainly coexist if the one works as a secondary form of differentiation under the premise of the other form's primacy. Moreover, they can coexist if they work on different levels or scales. Thus, for example, families which stand in a segmentary relationship to other families can still be a relevant element of a functionally differentiated society. Similarily, segmentary differentiation between large-scale polities on a global level for a long time could go along very well with an increasing functional differentiation within them. Yet, to the extent that functional differentiation has started to assert its primacy on a global scale (though it has by no means fully succeeded in doing so), it challenges the claims of segmentary differentiation and thus territorial demarcation to be the main organizing principle on a global scale. Nevertheless, segmentary differentiation may remain the dominant form of differentiation within functionally differentiated realms, most notably in the political system. In fact, in such a relationship of different forms of differentiation working on different 'levels', it may, in fact, be that both can be maximized at the same time.

Second, *segmentary and stratificatory differentiation* cannot, formally speaking, coexist on the same level. The whole notion of segmentary differentiation between states is undermined if they stand in a stratificatory relationship. Yet milder, less formalized forms of hierarchy do *de facto* coexist with segmentation. As Clark (2011) argues, special leadership privileges (and responsibilities) for great powers have long been a feature of classic Westphalian international society, and this logic can be extended to the hegemony of a single state or group of states so long as the rest of the members acknowledge the role as legitimate. Anarchy, in the sense of formal sovereign equality, can up to a point coexist with the stratification implied by hegemony.

Finally, it is not at all precluded that *stratificatory and functional differentiation* should coexist with each other. Quite the opposite: it seems that functional differentiation can increase inequalities on a global scale and thus reinforce stratification.

In sum, it seems that the relation between different forms of differentiation and the ordering principles which go along with them, as well as the accompanying establishment and erosion of a primacy of one or the other form, point to relatively long-term historical developments and struggles. While one might suspect, for example, a basic incompatibility between segmentation and stratification within the political system, the history of modern world politics can, to a significant degree, be read as a struggle between and the coexistence of these two forms of differentiation.

2 Dominant systems

When opening up the question of whether one function system predominates over the others, we need to be clear about two restrictions of the argument which follows. First of all, in the systems-theory-based reading of functional differentiation, as provided most notably in Stichweh's chapter, this question makes little sense at all, since function systems are treated as purely communicative, autopoietic systems. One could, under such theoretical premises, ask whether in specific contexts, or with reference to specific situations, one specific logic is more visible than another (or, to put it in a more theoretically stringent way, which function system deals more intensively with a particular question), but that would never result in any kind of 'domination' or 'subordination' of a function system.[1] Second, we start out in the following from that

[1] What could, in a reversal of the historical development of function systems, be possible hypothetically, however, is that a function system loses its characteristic as an autopoietic system and transforms into a *sub*system of another function system.

broad strand of IR thought which operates on the basis of the (explicit or implicit) assumption that the political system (i.e. the state) had some kind of dominance over other function systems in the Westphalian system. This means that we discuss the possibility of the dominance of the economic system only as a result of globalization and not as incorporated per se in the capitalist production mode. However, we think our argument would not change significantly if the starting points chosen were approaches operating on the assumption of a dominance of the economic system built into the capitalist mode of production (Marxism).

According to Niklas Luhmann (1997b: 166–7), only the political and legal systems are differentiated primarily spatially (i.e. segmentarily) in the form of states as national systems, while in all other function systems spatial boundaries play only secondary roles (see also Koenig-Archibugi, in this volume). From the perspective of political science, the national political systems utilized this tension to dominate other (nascent) function systems for centuries. Other function systems that reach beyond national borders, like the economy and science, could do so only to the extent that the political system tolerated it. In principle, the political system was able to prevent them. By inserting the logic of the political system into all aspects of society, totalitarian political systems aimed to control other societal systems and kept them in the cage of the national society. On the other side, liberal political systems also established mechanisms to curb function systems. Trade limitations for militarily relevant goods, restrictions on scientific cooperation, and the application of conditionality to membership of various intergovernmental organizations and regimes can be seen as cases in point.

Thus, one could argue that a lack of functional differentiation within the political system – as conceived by Waltz (1979) – combined with its residual claim to supremacy over other realms of society, for a long time slowed down the globalization of other function systems such as the economy, law, science, art etc. The lack of any checks and balances within the political system and the exclusive focus on power as the decisive means to prevail have indeed led, historically, to some degree of dominance of the political system over other function systems. Extending this argument, the lack of functional differentiation within the global political system may, for a long time, have prevented the full-scale development of other function systems as global systems.

With the end of the Cold War, the force of functional differentiation however developed its full potential. The prerequisite was the development of an internal differentiation of the political system. What we have seen since then is a *division of labour between different political units*. In denationalized issue areas, effective and legitimate governance depends on the

interplay of different political levels. It often requires transnational recognition of problems, decision making in global forums and the implementation of these decisions at the national level. A successful international climate regime, for instance, is based on a transnational recognition of human-made global warming and requires international decisions about norms and rules which then need to be implemented on the national level. Global governance thus does not run parallel to other levels of governance: rather, it is constituted by an interplay of different levels and organizations, in which each level and organization cannot work unilaterally. In this sense, the Westphalian system of segmentary differentiation of the political has transformed into a complex entity characterized by a division of labour or functional differentiation within the global political system. The example of global governance in this sense also highlights the more general point regarding the issue of 'levels' under the condition of functional differentiation and globalization. It becomes increasingly difficult to imagine 'levels' as largely mutually exclusive layers of social reality (and IR theory overall has traditionally had a strong inclination to operate on the assumption that levels of analysis to some degree mirror such layers). However, functional differentiation and the globalization of function systems cut across images of social reality consisting of exclusive levels. Levels of social reality still matter, but more often than not they have to be analysed as *inclusive* levels, that is to say that specific structures and processes belong to different levels at the same time, highlighting the complex interdependence between levels.[2]

As a result, the relationship between different function systems has changed. The global drive of function systems like economy, law, art, sport and science can now prevail and the political system has no good reason (or the means) to limit this development. In this sense, especially Richard Münch (in this volume) and Phil Cerny (in this volume) see a power shift in favour of the economic system and to the disadvantage of the political system. To the extent that national political systems compete with each other for economic resources and wealth and are embedded in the global political system with a certain division of labour, the demands of the economic system have to be, and can increasingly be, met. In this sense, many authors focusing on political economy, the relationship between economy and politics, see an increasing dominance of the economic system in the age of globalization. In the words of Richard Münch (in this volume: 84-5): 'Another consequence of the more far-reaching globalization of the economy in world society is the economization of those functional areas that had been kept in balance

[2] 'Glocalization' (Rosenau, 1997) would be one quite well-known proposal to express aspects of this inclusivity of levels.

with the economy under the auspices of the intervention state. The economization of functional areas that have not been considered economic so far comes on the heels of the economization of the economy'.

From the perspective of the theory of functional differentiation, these statements about the dominance of the economic system should be taken with a grain of salt, however. According to Stephen Stetter (in this volume), who argues in line with Luhmannian theorizing, there are weaker and stronger function systems, but each of them is autopoietic and they interact only via irritations. Along the same line, George Thomas (in this volume) emphasizes that different functional systems stand in a constitutive relationship with each other bound together by instrumental rationality.

Based on the notion of interdependence between different systems – which in this case are not seen as autopoietic – Kessler and Kratochwil (in this volume) even identify an ongoing feature of politics and law that differentiates them from others. Accordingly, they aspire to regulate all social systems. This gives the political system a special role. It is the place that is potentially able to coordinate different function systems and integrate them into a whole. Indeed, Matthias Koenig-Archibugi (in this volume) develops the hypothesis that, within the global political system, international institutions mediate demands from different function systems, in his case of health and economy, and thus play a privileged role.

In sum: globalization has changed the relationship between different function systems. On the one hand, it has certainly limited the power of the political system and helped other systems to develop according to their own logic. As a result, if systems interact, those that easily reach beyond national borders, especially the economy, are now in a privileged position. This leads to a revival of the notion that all systems are dominated and determined by the economic system. In our view, however, each of the systems maintains a certain level of autonomy and the political system remains in a central role. The potential possibility of national political systems striking back cannot be excluded, and that becomes more likely as the costs of uncurbed functional system operation become obvious. As we have seen in the responses to both the global war on terror since 2001, and the economic crisis since 2008, the state can seize back control over areas it had previously conceded to the operation of other function systems.

3 System or society

The question of how different systems relate to each other already points to the mode of integration of a modern society. Do global relations merely interact with each other in an adaptive mode or is the coordination based

on common core goals and values. In other words: do we live in a global system or in a global society?[3] The contributions to this volume provide four, partially compatible, answers to this question: *international society, world society 1* (neo-institutionalist), *world society 2* (based on systems theory), and *global governance*.

The first comes from a perspective that can be labelled the *international society* perspective. In this view, states and some other relevant collective actors have developed some basic notions of the common good of international society. These notions are generally much thinner than those associated with nation-state societies, because international societies have sovereignty in parts, whereas nation-state societies have sovereignty in the whole. International societies are thus in Bull's (1977) phrase 'anarchical societies'. They are not based on a total design for pursuit of the common good such as that represented by the US, French or German constitutions. Rather they seek the 'common good' more in ideas about degrees of order within an anarchic structure (e.g. restraints on the use of force, rules about diplomacy) and about specific areas, or projects of cooperation on regional or global scales (e.g. trade, finance, human rights, the environment). The norms of international societies reflect mainly the values and interests of leading powers, so our starting supposition is that the normative structure of international societies will reflect the dominant mode of differentiation within those leading powers. If the great powers are similar in their internal modes of differentiation, as they were when monarchy was the dominant form of government, or as they are, up to a point, now, when nearly all are some species of a capitalist political economy, then international society might be quite strong and deep. The same would apply if there is a single dominant hegemonic power able to project its own norms as legitimate at the system level. When the great powers are internally different, as during most of the twentieth century, they will fight over whose model is to shape the system level. International society will then be either weak, or only subglobal in extent, as was the case during the 1930s and again during the Cold War.

On this basis, one would expect monarchical and totalitarian powers to project mainly stratificatory international societies. Similarly, the more dominant functional differentiation is in the leading powers, the more one would expect to find it playing strongly in international society. Since functional differentiation is given most leeway within liberal societies, it

[3] Defining society by the presence of some common core values is different from the Luhmannian use of the term world society, which is based on communication alone; see also the contributions by Stichweh and Stetter in this volume.

is liberal great powers that project it most strongly into international society, albeit with some time lag and with the restraint of resistance from the structure of multiple sovereignties. When liberal powers project their own concepts of functional differentiation into international society, it generates the necessity for international institutions as coordinators of different sectoral subsystems (the ordering function). It also opens some space for global civil (and uncivil) society to feed into the process of norm formation (Clark, 2007b). Yet, at the same time, it sustains the ongoing relevance of stratificatory differentiation in international society reflecting the power differentials that underlie international society in the first place. Lora Viola (in this volume: 139) shows that the normative core of the system results from 'the stratificatory differentiation between included and excluded actors . . . that . . . also characterizes the relationship among system insiders (i.e. supposedly sovereign states) to a considerable extent'. In this sense, stratificatory differentiation becomes more or less co-constitutive with the rise of the liberal version of the common good in international society. Without denying this stratificatory differentiation, Mathias Koenig-Archibugi (in this volume: 183) argues on the basis of an analysis of the international sanitary conferences in the nineteenth century that international institutions and negotiations addressed, and contributed to solving, 'the tensions between the "demands" of different functional subsystems'. In this view, the notion of an (albeit thin) common good of the whole serves as a means to resolve conflicts between the demands arising from different sectors or subsystems in society.

The *world society 1* perspective is very similar to the international society perspective. The Stanford School presumes the existence of common values associated with the culture of instrumental rationality. In this sense, world society is based on common values that have diffused from the core to the periphery. Like the international society perspective, it implicitly assumes that hierarchies of reputation, and thus stratificatory diffentiation, play an important role in this process. The whole notion of emulation and mimicry requires role models in the first place. However, the world society 1 perspective sees these common values diffusing with and through the model of the modern state. It is not an interactively created common good – as, at least partially, in the international society perspective – but a culture that exists and is activated in parallel territorial units. According to George Thomas (in this volume), the cultural context is one of instrumental rationality (a legacy of Western dominance) which drives functional differentiation and modernization. It is, therefore, not an objective response to manage complexity, but a culturally determined response. Moreover, while the international society perspective is potentially open to any form of dominant power(s),

the world society 1 perspective views world society as specifically liberal and thereby supportive of the same mediating role for international institutions and the same logic of stratification.

The idea of normative integration of society via common values and goods is rejected completely by the *systems theory* or *world society 2* perspective. In this view, autopoetic function systems exclusively follow their own logic. The different subsystems adapt to each other via irritation. This Luhmannian view of world society is put forward by Stephen Stetter (in this volume: 137-45). Accordingly, the functional system of politics does not have a progressive purpose like fostering the common good. 'In a communication–theory-based understanding, "function" does not refer to concrete properties or normative goals such as societal integration or Parsonian goal attainment. It merely relates to the way in which communications in world society are ordered and how connectivity between different systems is practically ensured' (Stetter, in this volume: 143) Functional differentiation is neither purposeful nor does it serve larger functions, it is contingent and autopoietic. Modern (world) society is not integrated through common values and goods (although there are strong integrative semantics), but only comes to be recognized as a society through its being functionally differentiated.[4]

Finally, the *global governance* perspective empirically shares the view that global society as a whole is, if at all, weakly integrated. Accordingly, the growing differentiation and interdependence in the political sphere allows the globalization of function systems such as economy, science, art and law, which are each driven by their specific inner logic and seem to develop their own rules and regulations. While global governance consists of countless issue-area-specific international and transnational regimes, the interplay of these regimes seems to be accidental. Global governance happens without a head of government or a world supreme court responsible for the coordination of different policies as in national political systems. Moreover, one of the major functions of the national public (the *demos*) – namely, to decide in cases of goal conflicts between different sectors such as growth and clean environment, or security and freedom – cannot be fulfilled by sectoral publics which, by definition, are tied exclusively to their single issues: growth, environmental protection, security or freedom. Against this background, Richard Münch (in this volume) and Oliver Kessler and Friedrich Kratochwil (also in this

[4] Although it should be noted that what systems theory is concerned with is *system integration*, while many approaches which see society as integrated through common values and goods are concerned with *social integration*, that is, the ways and means by which many individuals are included in society; see Lockwood (1964).

volume) see an undermining of the old institutional equilibrium which provided places of coordination between different sectoral institutions and regulations on the national level. In this view, the institutions of embedded liberalism allowed for crossborder transaction but left the primacy with national governments (Ruggie, 1983b). To the extent that the productive interplay of the systems is dependent on a strong political system, the weakening of the political system relative to the economic system undermines the coordination of the different function systems on the basis of references to common goods (Richard Münch, in this volume).

Yet, Oliver Kessler and Fritz Kratochwil (in this volume) point out that fragmentation and reconstitutionalization may be two sides of the same coin. Global governance has indeed informally produced some substitute institutions which sometimes seem to assume such a coordinating role. The UN Security Council in particular has aspired to such a role by deciding on all those issues in which the goal of peace and the protection of human rights seem to contradict each other. Also, the G8 and G20 seem to define themselves as central coordinators by giving other international institutions a sense of direction, and by taking up those pressing issues which are not sufficiently dealt with by existing international institutions and assigning the task to one of them. These attempts, however, have remained limited. Moreover, they generate resistance on the part of many other actors, because membership in these institutions is not only restricted, but also highly exclusive. The members of these institutions are self-nominated to the role of coordinators and lack authorization and legitimacy to act in this function.

4 Implications

The use of new theoretical concepts for the analysis of social phenomena must be justified. At the end of the day, theoretical concepts are valuable when they allow the development of hypotheses that hold true in a large number of circumstances. The midterm criterion for passing the test is more moderate. Do the theoretical concepts utilized shed light on issues that both grasp developments that are in line with our intuitions and existing evidence *and* are neglected by the dominant theories? In this concluding chapter, we have identified areas which fulfil the midterm criterion and definitely deserve further research. All of these issues have far-reaching implications for IR theories.

First, a differentiation theory approach makes clear that international relations have always entailed stratificatory differentiation in addition to segmentation. The discipline of IR, which has been dominated by

the anarchy paradigm, tended to overlook different forms of hierarchy. There always has been a hierarchy between states, running counter to the notion of equal sovereignty. Membership in the club of states trumped other political units. Those states who were members of the great-power club excluded other states who were not invited to the often most important negotiations. Moreover, to the extent that international institutions develop authority of their own, there is a built-in notion that these international institutions are of a higher order than the states – another form of hierarchy. Finally, big, rich and powerful states accept the authority of international institutions only if they get privileged access to them and, quite often, special voting rights. In international institutions of this sort – like the Security Council or the International Monetary Fund – inequality between states gets institutionalized. Taking these developments together, mainstream IR would do well to downgrade the assumption that anarchy (i.e. segmentation) is the single dominant form of differentiation, and thus the defining condition of political structure. It should give equal weight to different forms of hierarchy or stratificatory differentiation. In this matter our conclusions reinforce the recent literature that focuses on hegemony (Hurrell, 2007; Watson 2007; Clark, 2011), hierarchy and authority (Hurd, 2007; Lake, 2009; Zürn *et al.*, 2012).

Second, with the rise of globalization and global governance, many function systems have moved easily beyond national borders and thus escaped the regulations of the nation-state. In an area notorious for being under-theorized, differentiation concepts provide a theoretical framing for the emergence of intergovernmental institutions and global governance, and show how this development reflects a specific form of social structure. To the extent that political regulation catches up with this changed spatial scope, we shall see international and also transnational institutions increasing both in quantity and strength. In general, these political institutions beyond the state are geared towards specific issue areas or sectoral subsystems. This leads to a sectoral fragmentation of political regulation. The question by what means and to what extent does coordination exist or can it be achieved (whether the nature of the coordination is merely mutually adaptive or normatively grounded) seems to be one of high importance for both practical and theoretical reasons. The conceptual toolbox of most existing theories of international relations does not shed light on this issue. Interestingly, the dominant mainstream response to this issue in IR is to look to hegemonic powers to provide leadership. This view connects to the point about stratification above, and makes sense in terms of our argument

that, if the leading powers are functionally differentiated within, then they will tend to project their internal structure outward into international society. If, however, one sees the logic of functional differentiation as being more diffuse and autonomous, reflecting the struggle for power and/or the autonomous logic of function systems, then hegemonic leadership is not necessary for the development of global governance.

Third, the study of international relations has, of course, always been about the interaction between different political levels. The differentiation-theory-based perspective highlights, in addition to what we know, that different types of social differentiation interact quite differently depending on the mix of political levels involved. For example, stratificatory differentiation and segmentary diffentiation exclude each other on the same level, that is to say that, as long as states are fully segmentarily differentiated, the development of hierarchical relationships among those units is unlikely. However, segmentary differentiation may be a prerequisite and a reinforcing mechanism for the development of hierarchy *within* those units. In this sense, it seems to be promising to look at the interaction between the interplay of the global, regional, national and local levels on the one hand and the interplay of different modes of differentiation on each of those levels. Again, the dominant IR toolbox would not allow us to do this.

In addition, because differentiation theory offers an alternative taxonomy, yet one that fits with, and up to a point unites, existing IR taxonomies, it enables us to see familiar things from a new perspective. For example, following the logics of differentiation at different levels against the backdrop of the projection of the mode of international society by the great powers, throws useful light on the contemporary structure and dynamics of international society. The existing normative framework of international society is largely a projection of those Western powers within which functional differentiation (aka modernity) initially took the dominant role. This process was led by northwest Europe from the nineteenth century and, since 1945, by the United States, which added its own twist to the liberal formula. What we have, therefore, is a liberal form of international society in which a whole group of liberal states have both successively and in parallel projected their interior functional differentiation onto international society. This quite substantial group – the West and its various close associates – feels relatively comfortable with this arrangement because it is in broad harmony with their domestic arrangements. It is a kind of collective hegemony reflecting their preferred mode of differentiation. For states that do not share this domestic pattern of

differentiation, an international society featuring functional differentiation is deeply threatening.

To give another example, during the nineteenth century, the expansion of this functionally differentiated international society was existentially threatening for both stratificatory states such as China, Japan and the Ottoman Empire, and segmentary tribal societies in Africa and elsewhere. Under a 'standard of civilization' defined in terms of functional differentiation, the former were delegitimized as barbaric, and the latter, identified as savages, struggled even to gain recognition as political entities. Both were vulnerable to colonization, and tribal societies, in some cases, to extermination. While the existential threat of colonization has receded, it is still the case that liberal international society and its baggage of functional differentiation threatens those states whose domestic modes of differentiation vary from the Western norm, mainly by being more stratificatory. That, in a quite profound sense, is what the Cold War was about. It is also what the current tensions between Western-dominated global international society on the one hand, and China, Iran, North Korea and many other non-democratic states on the other, is about. The ability to sustain democracy is a marker for a society with a relatively advanced form of functional differentiation. Compatibilities and incompatibilities between differentiation within states, and the dominant mode of differentiation in international society, tell us a great deal about status, legitimacy and power in contemporary world politics. As argued above, this feeds in a significant way into the stratification that accompanies the global spread of functional differentiation as the dominant norm.

These examples are, in our view, a sufficient proof that the utilization of a differentiation-theory perspective may be of great use in the study of world politics. What we need is more empirical research along these lines. Of course, there are also relevant themes on which most differentiation theories are remarkably silent: identities and rising powers are among them. An approach based on differentiation theory, however, opens up a range of empirical research questions in at least two respects. On the one hand, this pertains to the actual historical consolidation, and regional variations, of specific forms of differentiation. Thus, following Rudolf Stichweh (in this volume), what is needed are 'historical studies on individual function systems and the self-referential trajectory which established their macro-functionality' (in this volume: 61). One could in this regard, as Stichweh does, point to Parsons' and Luhmann's understanding of the political system and critically ask whether the function of the political system is indeed the production of collectively binding decisions. On the other hand, the empirical research questions pertain

to the interrelationships between different forms of differentiation (see particularly Jack Donnelly, in this volume). To the extent that these interrelationships are context-specific, as we argue, it can be expected that they can establish a fresh understanding of the historical phases of the international system.

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