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A comprehensive perspective on violent conflict dynamics

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Maximilian M. Meduna

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1. Introduction

Since 1948 the United Nations are conducting peacekeeping operations¹ across the globe and a vast amount of national, international and civic actors increasingly engage in various efforts to settle violent conflicts. The conflict constellations differ from case to case, change over time, and so do the respective methods of intervention. Yet not all efforts succeed, even under optimal conditions peacemaking and negotiations often fail and societies fall back into violence. It is my firm belief that beyond obvious obstacles, like the interests of concerned and intervening actors, the structural and bureaucratic conditions of external as well as internal conflict settlement efforts, there is still another issue at large, another piece of the puzzle that has escaped our attention: When dealing with violent group conflicts, we are dealing with the apparent, coping with the perceived. As ridiculously obvious this may sound, the thought behind this statement is that a central problem in resolving violent conflicts is the preoccupation with what we see (or believe to see) - ethnically, religiously or culturally antagonistic identities ranging far back into history, equally shared by all group members and indisputably incompatible with each other. The perceived reality is a clash of values, of ancient hatreds and of people willing to kill and willing to die for their culture; the apparent solutions oscillate between cooperation, coexistence, and segregation. Sadly, these solutions are rarely satisfying, the climate of fear and uncertainty often continues to threaten societies with another risk of violent confrontation long after formal peace negotiations have been concluded. Considering this difficult and complicated situation the following question arises: How else can violent group conflicts be dealt with, considering the facts? Unfortunately scientists, strategical and political advisors, decision-makers and most notably the public media usually fail to escape the trap of responding to this question. At this point, before even engaging in a discussion, a reflective and critical scepticism has to enter the stage: The first mistake in the question above is to rely on "the facts" concerning large-group identities and beliefs, which after thorough investigation turn out to be rather ideological constructions than essential core values of individuals making them capable of fierce violence, induced into the public consciousness by individual actors and interest clusters. The second mistake: What is commonly perceived as a social group conflict is in fact not a group conflict at all, but merely a simplified explanatory frame for various complex micropolitical processes behind the stage.

1 Although the term *peacekeeping* is generally attributed to the first generation of UN missions, the changing international political arena and new requirements for conflict management forced peacekeeping operations to adapt respectively: among others, the terms *peacebuilding*, *peace enforcement* or *peacemaking* have been introduced. See also: Boutros-Ghali (1992): "An Agenda for Peace" and Boutros-Ghali (1995): "Supplement to An Agenda for Peace".

The understanding of these processes is the missing piece of the puzzle. Based on the case of Rwanda and various other conflict situations the following thesis shall demonstrate the mechanisms and dynamics of emerging violent conflicts and reveal the potential of an intelligent conflict management - beneath the apparent and beyond the perceived.

Much has been written about various issues like the “relationship between identities and interests; the relative power of institutions, resources, and opportunities in facilitating mobilization; the function of atrocities and extreme violence; and the role of political entrepreneurs” (King 2004: 438) within the fields of political and social sciences, yet so far no comprehensive theoretical approach has been attempted in order to present a general model comprising the essential processes behind social conflicts commonly perceived as “violent group conflicts”. In the last several years clear trends² towards a micropolitical understanding of social violence have emerged (King 2004: 447). These new ways of scientific perception can be attributed to the dramatic changes in the international landscape since the end of the Cold War and the rise of new actors, new political issues and new power relations among and within societies across the globe. From the viewpoint of a political scientist I regret to concur that “(...) most of our knowledge of nationalism and ethnicity stems from academic writings located entirely outside political science” (Cederman 2002: 409, cf. also Brubaker & Laitin 1998: 427 et seqq.). As a social anthropologist I have been thoroughly familiarised with the issues, nevertheless I strongly oppose the common practice of dealing with nationalism and ethnicity as *objects* of social analysis due to reasons that shall be made clear in the course of the paper at hand. Also, one has to mention the unfortunate institutionalised fragmentation of scientific fields, each concerned with the uniqueness of its approach, demarcating its areas of engagement and thus impeding a diversified, interlinked and comprehensive view on a reality that itself is nothing but diversified, interlinked and comprehensive. On the basis of scientific findings of various social disciplines I will present an approach that resolves the existing shortcomings and provides a comprehensive perspective on violent conflict dynamics. Still, if one performs a thorough interdisciplinary literature survey on the issues of conflict research, analysis and management, one soon realises that the vast majority of existing scientific contributions fails to grasp the complex mechanisms and common dynamics underlying such phenomena as “ethnic” or “religious” conflicts unleashing “collective” or “group” violence. The

² According to Charles King, the four central characteristics of this emerging research programme are: “a stress on engaging violence at analytical levels far below the nation-state; an attentiveness to how discrete episodes of violence are defined; a skepticism about the utility of labels applied to conflicts from the outside; and a commitment to finding ways of incorporating the voices of participants into the analysis.” (2004: 447)

terms are used in quotation marks since they represent central concepts used by many authors in a quite unreflected manner to describe their perceptions of the social reality. However, absorbing the internal labels of conflict situations (e.g. describing a conflict in terms of a collective ethnic or cultural clash) and reproducing them as an initial point for further analysis on the one hand, or completely dismissing human action (e.g. violent outbursts) as irrational behaviour on the other hand, disregards the dynamic foundations and sociopolitical processes underlying phenomena that appear to be static social facts at first glance.³

It is the intention of this comprehensive paper to examine the actor-based level of emerging conflicts and to abandon the commonly reconstructed notions of irrationality as well as labels and framings of collective groups being in conflict, as it is predominantly the case with central conflict elites, public media, and -unfortunately- also within the realm of scientific literature. Exemplifying the processes on different cases we will discover the possibility of transcending the illusion of “group conflict” and acknowledging the role of individuals, interests, power structures and diverse dispositions on a huge variety of levels in the social universe. A central aspect will be the examination of the relationship between the social construction of “ethnic” identities and violence - a focus which has yet not been paid much attention. According to James Fearon and David Laitin there is an intrinsic strategic aspect in this relationship - while only very limited evidence links “specific cultural or discursive systems” *per se* to incidences of social violence, a considerable amount of cases show that “large scale ethnic violence is provoked by elites seeking to gain, maintain, or increase their hold on political power” (Fearon & Laitin 2000b: 846). This somehow simplistic view nonetheless provides an important insight on the role of individual actors or conglomerates of actors - an insight that will be elaborately developed in this paper. Based on the central works of Pierre Bourdieu I will examine the interplay of these central actors in emerging conflicts and clarify certain mechanisms that are commonly obscured by and within the science and practice of contemporary conflict research. However, the *Theory of Practice* is only a starting point, from which I wish to depart for a more thorough inspection of dynamics as conflict framing, actor analysis, interest implementation, group mobilisation and collective identification. As mentioned before, different elements of these processes engendering group mobilisation and identity (re-)construction as well as economic profit-oriented perspectives can be found in various clusters of literature ranging from anthropology, sociology, political science to economic theory. However, it seems that a comprehensive approach transcending singular

³ The problem of analytical perception will be further dealt with in chapter 4.2. and elaborated more profoundly in the central part of this work (chapter 5).

disciplines has yet to be made. The following thesis is an attempt to do so and thereby to broaden the understanding and awareness of “what is behind the scenes” of violent conflicts, strongly opposing reductionistic views emerging as rhetorical legitimisations of central elites and consequently being reproduced by the media and the scientific community. In fact, based on existing evidence the presented theoretical framework shows that singular collective identities are reinforced and reconstructed *as a result of a conflict* and not vice versa.

Bearing this in mind, I would like to even go further and contemplate the problems and dangers of scientific and political descriptions of certain social “realities”, in the end being another subjective construction capable of actually *creating* these realities. I propose an approach to conflict management that is, as opposed to current practice, not re-active in a sense that it revives the *imagined* frontlines as a basis for peace negotiations, but fosters the critical reconsideration of positions acquired and emotionally internalised during the conflict. The last chapter shall also provide an overview of the possibilities of implementing these new findings; the institutionalisation of mechanisms preventing collective segregation as a means of policy and interest pursuit, considering empirical cases as the tragic events in Rwanda and other situations worldwide. Hereby the role of the United Nations Organisation and its respective bodies as the most relevant instance within the realm of International Conflict Management, its current condition, deficiencies and potential for improvements shall be kept in mind.

2. Hypothesis and research questions

Prior to constructing our “educated guess” about the issues at hand, i.e. before formulating an appropriate hypothesis for the thesis, there are some relevant aspects to be considered. Anticipating the main theoretical toolkit applied in the framework of the following analysis, I want to stress the importance of scientific practice as a generative, structuring process on the world as examined. Any theory building in the scientific realm as well as in public political or medial discourses always implies an active “empirical operation” (cf. Bourdieu & Wacquant 2006: 61), it is a fundamental error to regard scientific research and theory formation as a closed, logocentric and self-referential institution separate from the empirical world.⁴ Observation is never a passive act, perception and consequently action is never theory-less and solely descriptive in a purely objective sense.

Expanding this idea a little further, I would like to present the following hypothetical circle of thought, which in itself already comprises central ideas of the model elaborated in the chapters to come: (1) The initial premise is that a human being is, if at all, willing to sacrifice his own life and/or to kill on three conditions only: due to an ideological conviction or mental disorder/desensitisation (internal constraints) or under [death] threat (external constraint). (2) As will be demonstrated in the following matrix of my hypothesis, there are two basic options for perceiving and dealing with the situation of a violent social conflict: Either to define and construct a certain conflict reality in antagonistic group-based terms or (as shall be the argument in the presented model) to recognise it as a conflict of interest-based social cluster nodes (cf. chapter 5.2.3.) with a specific distribution in the social field. (3) In the latter perspective the group-based view is merely a function of the cluster nodes (or “elites” - suffice this simplistic explanation at this point) having an interest in the conflict situation as a means of securing the capitals⁵ at stake and simultaneously obscuring these mechanisms for legitimisation and mobilisation purposes (cf. chapter 5.2.4.). (4) To comprehensively analyse the process of an emerging conflict is to realise the underlying dynamics and deduce the

⁴ Cf. Bourdieu & Wacquant 2006: 56-62. According to the sociological approach of Pierre Bourdieu, in scientific practice ‘concept’, ‘perception’ and ‘reflection’ continuously fade into each other, theory is interlinked with practice. “Jede noch so geringfügige empirische Operation (...) beinhaltet bewußte oder unbewußte [*sic!*] theoretische Entscheidungen; jedes noch so abstrakte Begriffs-Puzzle gewinnt Klarheit erst durch die systematische Konfrontation mit der empirischen Realität.” (*ibid.*: 61)

⁵ The term “capital” is not to be understood in financial or economic terms only. Rather, it comprises various forms of capital as understood by the sociology of Bourdieu, cf. chapter 5.1.1. In this sense the introduced term “Capital Cluster Nodes” encompasses the distribution of actors having an interest in a certain form of capital within the examined social field, cf. chapter 5.2.3.

respective consequences. (5) As raised above, it is crucial to keep in mind that all human perception of reality, including scientific analysis, is always a subjective practice of constructing that reality based on biological predispositions (the possibilities and limits of human intellect) and the social habitus of the individual. Therefore, its application on the subject examined has imminent moral and ethical implications one has to be aware of (cf. chapter 6.1.). (6) Individual, subjective reality is a facet of the social reality, the latter being merely the merged consensus of a certain majority of individual realities (thus implying that diverse social realities exist, depending on the field and the context of individual actors). (7) Acknowledging the moral and ethical implications of a perception or an analysis, the only reasonable (and indisputably *political*) aim of such must be the construction of a social reality *functionally efficient* to the concerned majority (being defined as broad as physically possible) and accounting for the value of human life. (8) A broad, consensual and functionally efficient social reality is a social field providing the best possible opportunities of self-fulfilment for all concerned individuals without threatening the self-fulfilment of any other individual. Therefore, *inter alia* opportunities for social certainty, informational transparency, peaceful conflict resolution, just participation and access must be consolidated to prevent the two main conditions for violent conflict: ideological conviction and external threat (back at point 1).⁶ Keeping in mind the practical consequences and and empirical interconnectedness of theory building I now present the variables of my hypothesis that shall be explained and clarified in the following section:

variable	description	variable type
c	violent social conflict	dependent variable (static observation)
a	perception / analysis of (c)	independent variable (flexible)
x	society affected by (c)	subject group
$f(a)$	practice resulting from (a)	treatment / exposure
$\mathbb{P}(c)$	risk probability of continued (c)	outcome measure
$\neg x$	contrasted empirical examples	control group

Chart 1: Basic variables of the proposed hypothesis.

The independent variable is flexible, so according to the foregoing introduction to this chapter two possible variations shall be defined, adding one of two possible values to the predefined

⁶ Potentials for implementations of the resulting insights will be presented in chapter 6.2.

variables. As the core of the hypothesis is the relation between the independent and the dependent variable, therefore consequential variations of $f(a)$ and (c) shall also be defined:

variable value	description	variable type
a=0	“culturalistic” group-based view	1 st variation of independent variable
a=1	comprehensive conflict model	2 nd variation of independent variable
$f(a=0)$	limited range of solutions	treatment variable resulting from (a0)
$f(a=1)$	broader range of options	treatment variable resulting from (a1)
c=0	monolithic, labelled group conflict	dependent variable as linked to (a0)
c=1	CCN-based conflict - multiple dynamics & actors	dependent variable as linked to (a1)

Chart 2: Relevant variable variations of the proposed hypothesis.

Violent social conflicts, being the examined core subject of the thesis, represent the dependent variable (c) of our analysis. It is an empirically observable phenomenon defined in the broadest possible sense - a conflict, corresponding to the least common denominator of any existing definition, having two basic properties: being *violent*, i.e. comprising the use of human-generated violence (e.g. armed conflicts) and the effect of human-caused damage (e.g. death victims); and being *social*, i.e. involving a broader number of concerned individuals and affecting a given society (variable x^7 , e.g. nation, community, etc.). The independent variable (a) of the analysis is the proposed dynamic element of the hypothesis, underlying the assumption that its change may affect the configuration and reality of a certain violent conflict examined. As presented in the introductory chapter and further elaborated in the sections to come, a comprehensive model of emerging violent conflict situations (a=1) embracing the micropolitical dynamics beyond the perceived superficiality enables a broader range of options for a given conflict transformation, as opposed to an antagonistic, essential and group-based perspective - here called a “culturalistic” view (a=0, cf. chapter 6). The bridging variable in the relationship between the observed violent conflict and the specific perspective on the conflict is the *practice* of conflict description, intervention and management as resulting from that perspective (therefore *function* $f(a)$ of a certain perception or understanding) and applied

⁷ In the analysis the concerned conflict society (x) will be examined under the commonly applied premise of being in the state of a violent group conflict (a=0, c=0), contrasting empirical examples of conflict situation which have been dealt with in a more diversified way rather corresponding to the presented approach represent the variable ($\neg x$, “non-x”) and shall demonstrate the possibilities of alternative and more sustainable conflict transformation in the (x)-cases.

on the given conflict situation. Considering the mentioned moral implications of theory building I feel compelled to add a teleological element to the possible outcomes of the presented causalities, that shall be proved in the course of the paper - the risk probability of continued violent social conflict. Shifting the understanding of a conflict situation from an antagonistic notion (as absorbed from within the conflict actors's framing rhetorics) to a more dynamic, diversified and comprehensive point of view as a basis for further action in dealing with the constellation enables more practical options, alters the dominant frames and thus delegitimises current policies. As a consequence, it has the potential to decrease the overall risk of continued violence if appropriately implemented and institutionalised. Summarising from the above we now can proceed to the creation of a formalised hypothesis. The initial question may thus be formulated as follows:

Does the perception of violent social conflicts affect the consequences of the respective analysis and / or the practice of conflict management based on that perception?

Indeed, applying the underlying premise as a basis for the hypothesis, the following conditional statement can be deduced:

Assumptions about the specific reality of a violent social conflict may affect the conflict situation if propagated by appropriate means of politics, media and/or scientific analysis addressed to and absorbed by concerned actors.

Based on the presented variables two formalised hypotheses can be framed, in fact only echoing what has already been explained so far in a more scientifically concise manner. The initial hypothesis reads as follows:

- (1) If the understanding of a conflict situation by relevant actors is being altered, then the reality of the concerned violent conflict situation itself has the potential to change.

(1a) $a=0 \Rightarrow c \sim (c=0)$

If the understanding of a conflict situation by relevant actors corresponds to a "culturalistic" group based view, then the reality of the concerned violent conflict situation tends towards the (difficultly resolvable) situation of a monolithic, labelled group conflict.

(1b) $a=1 \Rightarrow c \sim (c=1)$

If the understanding of a conflict situation by relevant actors corresponds to a comprehensive conflict model (as presented in the paper), then the reality of the concerned violent conflict situation tends towards the (more easily traceable and thus resolvable) situation of a CCN⁸-based conflict with multiple dynamics and actors.

What is the relevance of understanding the complex processes behind the simplistic framing of social conflicts by central actors, the latter being so keenly absorbed by the media, political entrepreneurs and the scientific community? And ontological awareness of the dynamics “behind the scenes” can serve as a basis for a teleological practice of *creating* a peaceful reality of reduced violence or even transformed conflict.⁹ Accordingly, the second, consequential formalised hypothesis has to be phrased as follows:

(2) The practice resulting from the respective understanding of a social conflict, applied on the conflict situation by relevant actors has consequences on the risk probability of continued violent social conflict.

(2a) $f(a=0) \cup (c=0) \Rightarrow x \sim < \mathbb{P}(c)$

If practice resulting from the “culturalistic” group-based understanding of a social conflict, providing only a limited range of solutions (e.g. cooperation, coexistence, segregation), is applied by relevant actors and the conflict is being perceived as a monolithic, labelled group conflict, then the society affected by the conflict tends to evolve into a state of increased risk probability of continued violent social conflict.

⁸ CCN stands for the term “Capital Cluster Node”, initially explained in footnote 5, for a detailed presentation of the concept cf. chapter 5.2.3.

⁹ Considering “conflict” *per se* to be an intrinsic element of social development, I tend to prefer using the term conflict *transformation* instead of *resolution* - the aim of any (internal and external) conflict management efforts has to be the transformation from a *violent* status quo to a *non-violent* situation, which is the topic of this paper. Only then conflict resolution can take place within the appropriate institutional means of society (internal process).

$$(2b) \quad f(a=1) \cup (c=1) \Rightarrow x \sim > \mathbb{P}(c)$$

If practice resulting from the understanding of a social conflict according to a comprehensive conflict model (as presented in the paper), providing a broader range of options, is applied by relevant actors and the conflict is being perceived as a CCN-based conflict with multiple dynamics and actors, then the society affected by the conflict tends to evolve into a state of decreased risk probability of continued violent social conflict.

Logically linked with the elaborated hypotheses the main intention of my thesis is to examine the possibility of establishing a comprehensive perspective on violent conflict dynamics, as opposed to the common view of “culturalistic” group-based conflicts, so often attached to phenomena of “ethnic” conflict instances. Therefore, the central research question shall read as follows:

Can a general model of emerging violent social conflicts be established, dismissing the superficial perception of collective violence between antagonistic groups marked by singular identity labels and instead outlining the underlying processes and dynamics on a micro-political level?

For further clarity the research question has to be split into several sub-questions that will be answered in the course of the paper and will serve as the foundations for validating the hypotheses.

- (a) *How and under which circumstances do certain social conflicts become transformed (framed) into violent group conflicts?*
- (b) *What are the common processes and dynamics underlying the emergence of violent group conflicts?*
- (c) *To what degree are violence and identity indeed “collective” or actor-based and what are the implications of the respective public perception of conflict situations and the subsequent practice of relevant actors?*

Having clarified the central issues of the research programme, in the following chapters methodological considerations and a thorough assessment of the topic shall be presented.

3. Methodological considerations

A comprehensive analysis of specific phenomena in complex modern societies has to include the processes of self-presentation and mutually reinforcing perceptions of different actors. This requires the implementation of a method of examining *documentary realities* on the one hand and their integration within the broader framework of written texts on the other hand. In the context of this research special attention has to be turned to the aspect of information proliferation and its secondary effect of shaping realities via postulated objectivity as a means of rhetoric legitimisation. The codified framework of literature feeds back to the dynamics of social life - an extensive literature study comprising scientific contributions, documents, case studies and the like lies therefore at the core of this paper. As illustrated in the hypothesis section, the public understanding of an emerging violent conflict can have a significant influence on the development of the conflict situation itself, creating a spiral effect (cf. chapter 5.2.6.). The development of an understanding of the occurring processes requires the examination of explanatory frames and paradigms provided for a given situation. Efforts made in the methodological approach of *frame analysis*¹⁰ are a good basis, the *praxeological toolkit* of Pierre Bourdieu, however, constitutes a more appropriate approximation to the issue, for it has the potential of combining complex macro-perspectives with micropolitical, actor-based dynamics (cf. chapter 5.). Bourdieu himself always preached a *methodological pluralism*, i.e. the adequacy of methods to the problem at hand and the critical reflection of the applied methods in the course of the research.¹¹ It is the critical element of social science that is vital in the efforts of deconstructing simplified social realities which provide a field for the exercise of power and domination: "Aus Bourdieus Sicht hat der Soziologe die Aufgabe, der sozialen Welt ihre Naturwüchsigkeit und Schicksalshaftigkeit zu nehmen, das heißt, die Mythen zu zerstören, mit denen Machtausübung verschleiert und Herrschaft perpetuiert wird." (Bourdieu & Wacquant 2006: 81). Thus, the aspired goal of this thesis remains the construction of a comprehensible and reproducible framework for the understanding of emerging violent conflicts, whose validity shall be exemplified on a variety of cases.

The generally qualitative approach will be complemented with an additional theoretical sampling, consisting of narrative and ethnographical interviews¹² that can provide an insight into the habitual dispositions of concerned individuals.

¹⁰ Cf. Goffman (1975): *Frame Analysis*, and Benford & Snow (2000) "Framing Processes and Social Movements".

¹¹ Cf. Bourdieu & Wacquant 2006: 55.

¹² All quoted interviews in this paper have been conducted by the author with individuals having had a personal experience with the discussed conflicts, most notably with the genocide in Rwanda in 1994.

4. Context, assessment and limitations

In the following section I would like to define the central concepts and issues more precisely. We mentioned in chapter 2 that *violent social conflicts* are the examined core subject of the thesis. However, due to the emergence of a multitude of literature and approaches in the field of conflict research within the last couple of years it is necessary to identify the examined topic in a more detailed fashion. The following chapter “It’s all about violence” shall provide the essential landmarks of the issues to be analysed. Due to the specific objective of this contribution, its assessment and placement in the existing scientific canon will have the function of challenging popular and mostly unquestioned approaches to the question of group conflicts. Chapters 4.2. and 4.3. will lay the groundwork for a more subtle understanding, an openness and reflectivity necessary for appreciating the illustration of the complex dynamics to be presented in chapter 5.

Needless to say, the following discussion is outlining only one (however crucial) of many aspects to be taken into consideration when dealing with conflict management. The thesis at hand is neither an explanation for everything nor a guide for peacemakers, suggesting how to proceed in every case - it is my firm belief that neither of these would be useful nor feasible, as each violent conflict has to be comprehended in its specific context. Nevertheless, an understanding of common mechanisms that are at the fundament of any social interaction in contemporary societies can clarify much of the confusion present every time social violence occurs. In the words of Charles King: “Violent episodes are, if not predictable, then certainly patterned forms of social interaction” (King 2004: 439) that have to be unveiled in order to expose the true nature of a conflict.

4.1. It’s all about violence: Conflicts, wars and numbers

A significant part of scientific approaches dealing with violent conflict situations and wars is preoccupied with quantitative definitions of the examined phenomena, searching for adequate thresholds for situations to qualify for a predefined category. As a matter of fact, quantitative approaches usually disregard the latency of social conflicts and the structural imbalances leading to violent outbreaks, measuring and registering only those cases that provide a sufficient “body count”. A prominent example of these statistical data collections are the *Correlates of War* (COW) data sets, capturing and classifying various clusters of war-type

situations. Apart from the obvious conclusion, that any type of war has to involve at least two parties in specific constellations, the COW project distinguishes between inter-state, extra-state and intrastate wars (civil wars only classified), each with a minimum number of deaths: “To be classified as an inter-state war, (...) there should be at least 1000 battle related fatalities among all of the system members involved. A state involved is regarded as a participant if it incurs a minimum of 100 fatalities or has 1000 armed personnel engaged in fighting. (...) To be classified as an extra-state war, (...) there should be at least 1000 battle related fatalities in every year for each of the state participants. (...) In order to be classified as a civil war, (...) there should be at least 1000 battle related deaths during the civil war. In order to constitute effective resistance, both sides must have been initially organized for violent conflict, or the weaker side must be able to inflict upon the stronger opponents at least five percent of the number of fatalities it sustains.”¹³

Classifying the world in self-defined boxes seems to be a nice and entertaining business to do, however, I remain doubtful about the practical use of these categorisations. Except, of course, as a means of legitimisation in those cases, where people die in violent confrontations and leaders can in good conscience claim not to be in a state of war, referring to the existing scientific definitions. It is crucial to remain critical and flexible about quantitative benchmarks when peace in a society is threatened and the situation remains ignored until it reaches a legitimate intensity. Numbers can be a useful tool in comparative analyses, however, I strongly oppose the attitude to apply them as a basic criteria for the definition of violent conflicts. Furthermore, the mere measurement of direct “battle related fatalities” is problematic insofar, as it does not take into account the number of people dying from war-related circumstances as undernourishment or diseases. The unfortunately difficultly measurable number of “indirect war deaths” is nevertheless being considered by the Human Security Report Project in their conflict analyses (cf. Human Security Report 2009: 11).

In any case, the distinction between inter-state wars and other conflict types provides a good perspective on the changing nature of wars. With the end of the last catastrophic war in 1945 and the consequences of the following territorial decolonisation, emerging consciousness of international state responsibility and new sub-state actors led to a clear shift of large-scale violence beyond the interstate arena. What is generally being subsumed by the term “civil

¹³ <http://www.correlatesofwar.org> | 18.03.2010. Fearon and Laitin, whose scientific contributions will be referred to repeatedly in the course of the paper, apply criteria “similar to those stated by the Correlates of War (COW) project”, however, they see “no reason in principle to exclude anticolonial wars”. (Fearon & Laitin 2003: 76). Likewise, economic approaches to social violence adhere to similar thresholds: “We define civil war as an internal conflict with at least 1,000 combat-related deaths per year.” (Collier & Hoeffler 2004: 565)

wars” is a complex conglomerate of very different cases, involving a variety of conflicting parties: state actors, economically influential individuals, associations and corporations, ideological and/or extremist movements emerged from socially, politically and/or economically oppressed parts of national populations, transnational communities, and various other groups, self- or externally labelled as homogenous tribal, ethnic, cultural or religious communities. The decline of interstate wars does not mean the decline of state involvement in conflicts, new constellations provided new and more feasible opportunities of shifting power relations and thus improving a given actors relative position in the contested field. In the second half of the twentieth century about 3.33 million battle deaths are reported in 25 interstate wars, as opposed to 16.2 million in 127 civil wars.¹⁴ Interestingly, “[t]he rate of outbreak is 2.31 per year since 1945, highly variable but showing no significant trend up or down.” (Fearon & Laitin 2003: 77). This finding strongly contradicts to widely accepted and repeatedly mentioned scientific as well as popular notions, that “ethnic” or “cultural” conflicts are on the rise, especially since the end of the Cold War that supposedly oppressed the latent ethnic hatreds brewing beneath the main ideological currents.¹⁵ The apparent dilemma raises the question of classifying conflicts and attributing them specific labels. What is actually “ethnic” in ethnic conflicts? What distinguishes them from other instances of “civil war”-type conflicts? Is there really a verifiable rise in ethnic conflicts or does ethnicity rather provide a more convenient and efficient framing for the mobilisation of forces and implementation of power-related interests? These questions shall be considered in the following chapters and provide a starting point for the development of a new comprehensive understanding.

Of course, other scientific institutions also oppose the quantitative approach in classifying conflicts and attempt to establish different methods of their own. A good example of a qualitative definition of conflict and war is provided by the Heidelberg Institute on International Conflict Research (HIIK). According to the HIIK “[w]ars and conflicts of lesser intensity are classified according to the actual amount of violence observed, and not according to the number of fatalities”¹⁶ within five intensity levels. However, the scientific fixation to concisely define a “conflict” on a formal level, again, excludes instances that do not meet the postulated criteria. The HIIK defines a conflict “as the clashing of interests (positional differences) over national values of some duration and magnitude between at least two

¹⁴ Fearon & Laitin 2003: 75, cf. also Kuntzsch 2007: 5, quoted from Sarkees *et al.* 2003: 61-65.

¹⁵ The most influential of these semi-scientific and best-selling speculations was of course Samuel P. Huntington and his idea of the “Clash of Civilizations”. Cf. chapter 6.1. for an in-depth examination on the relationship of “culturalist” approaches and the described reality on the ground.

¹⁶ <http://www.hiik.de/en/methodik> | 18.03.2010

parties (organized groups, states, groups of states, organizations) that are determined to pursue their interests and achieve their goals.” (HIIK Conflict Barometer 2009: 84) It seems questionable what “national values” are supposed to be and if they are being equally defined by all conflicting parties and external observers, although a more precise range of *conflict items* is defined subsequently: territory, secession, decolonization, autonomy, system/ideology, national power, regional predominance, international power, resources, others (cf. *ibid.*). Furthermore, the definition implies a very essentialistic attitude, postulating a clash of interest of homogenous groups with all members equally “determined to pursue their interests and achieve their goals”, which also are the same for each and every member of the conflicting party. Such an approach is acceptable as a statistical approximation, however, its unconscious application on a conflict analysis reduces the actual complexity of a variety of actors with a multitude of interests to a simple, binary image of conflicting collective agents and thus impedes any approach to a sustainable conflict transformation.

If one compares the more or less static number of civil war outbreaks per year mentioned above with the HIIK statistic of conflict quantity over the same time period (in accordance with their criteria), which indisputably is rising, the only logical conclusion is that the rate of conflict settlement is diminishing and thus a large number of contemporary conflicts are long-term conflicts that have failed to be resolved.

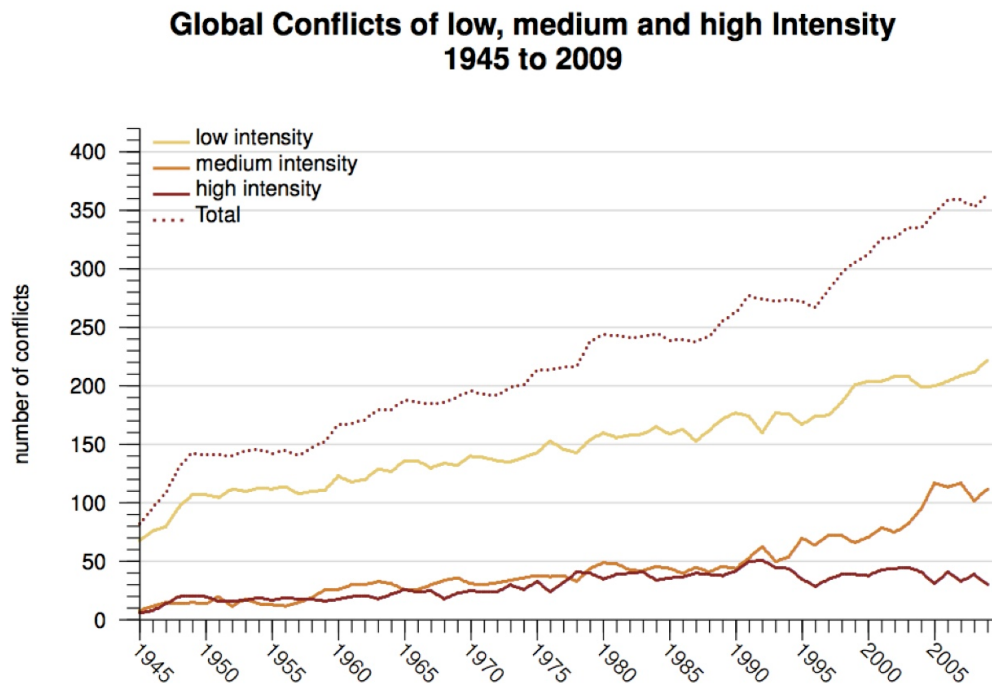


Chart 3. Source: <http://www.hiik.de/en/downloads> | 18.03.2010

Contrary to common beliefs, “the prevalence of civil war in the 1990s was *not* due to the end of the Cold War” but rather due to the “steady, gradual accumulation of civil conflicts that began immediately after World War II” (Fearon & Laitin 2003: 75) as is clearly illustrated by the chart above. Evidence also suggests that a greater degree of “ethnic” or cultural diversity by itself does not increase the risk of civil war (cf. *ibid*), which again raises the question of the nature of conflict clustering and labelling. Therefore, after having reviewed examples of quantitative and qualitative approaches to the definition of conflicts which both had unsatisfying elements, I come back to the basic identification of *violent social conflicts* I presented earlier. Corresponding to the least common denominator of any existing definition, conflicts in the sense to be used in the following, have two basic properties: being *violent*, i.e. comprising the use of human-generated violence (e.g. armed conflicts) and the effect of human-caused damage (e.g. death victims); and being *social*, i.e. involving a broader number of concerned individuals and affecting a given society (e.g. nation, community, etc.). Yet it often appears to be problematic to find an appropriate bridging explanation between the terms *conflict* and *violence* as two interconnected, nevertheless distinct phenomena. Violence can be examined as an eruption of latent conflicts, however, it is an analytical error to identify violent events as a mere effect of conflict situations. “Violent events are themselves constructed as part of the process of social violence; they are wrapped up in the constitutive power of collective action” (King 2004: 449). As will be shown in chapter 5.2.4., instigated violence can function as a means to mobilise for conflict and is therefore not only the “tip of the iceberg” (as we happen to observe it) but rather a process at the very foundations of emerging conflicts. Observing and perceiving violent events wrongly leads researchers to the conclusion that these events represent the peak of what is going on: a clash of antagonistic groups. All micropolitical nuances are being merged into one cluster, as “something called ‘the Bosnian war’ or ‘the Rwandan genocide’—as the only serviceable dependent variable. Cases, in other words, have become coterminous with conflicts. But violence does not come in prepackaged units” (449). Selecting cases on the basis of ethnic differences ignores the complexity simply reproducing rhetoric frames from within the conflict. Instead, it is crucial to try “explaining what is going on beyond a host of *ad hoc* appeals to ethnicity.” (Gilley 2004: 1159)

Beyond this host stands a complex nexus of social processes and mechanisms that link organised and perpetuated violence with notions of collective identity. Having realised the dynamic and instrumental nature of ethnicity, many authors, who do not fully accept purely constructivist approaches to social identification, nevertheless “differentiate between ‘*essential*’ and ‘*ascribed*’ concept[s] of ethnic conflict. Whereas in the former, ethnicity is at the

heart of the conflict, in the latter the conflict is merely framed in ethnic terms” (Kuntzsch 2007: 6). However, defining essential “ethnic conflicts” as a conflict type *sui generis* and explaining the central motivation for collective violence as a shared motivation constituted by ethnic belonging is still a very superficial and reductionistic approach that turns out to be misleading if one examines cases of alleged “ethnic violence” more closely. The same authors who admit a “confusion and fuzziness in the terminology” and an apparent “lack of conceptual clarity” within the concept of ethnic violence (*ibid.*: 10) still follow the lead of “essential” concepts, arguing that ethnicity is a “domestic security issue” (96) that can be analysed as a security dilemma. The only reason analysts like Kuntzsch seem not to abandon the idea of “essential” ethnicity altogether is to reaffirm the validity of realist concepts, which had their heyday in the ideologically split bipolar block-situation of the Cold War. Realist theory, however, cannot be effectively applied in the study of violent sub-state conflicts, for it is based on the false assumption of primordial group homogeneity and thus perhaps legitimate in the realm of pre-globalised, nation-state-based international relations, but certainly not in most contemporary conflict situations consisting of a variety of structural and processual elements that have to be taken into account: a multitude of actors with different goals and interests, different interest-intensities, power relations and knowledge, influence, control over resources, institutions and executive potentials, constellations, conflict structure, development and continuity, its interconnectedness, the actor’s positions, dispositions and habitus in the contested field, psychological mechanisms of identification and group affiliations, dynamic aspects of conflict development: action, advocacy, lobbying, funding, support, policy, (material, financial, intellectual, and symbolic) flows, legitimisation, processes of in- and exclusion, structuring and defining the relative position in the field, perception, identity shaping, its symbolical reproduction and instrumentalisation. These are the crucial aspects one cannot dismiss when analysing a conflict situation. A broad systemic approach merging this diversity into simple, static, approximations does not account for the complexity. Kuntzsch even admits that “the unitary actor assumption underlying the application of realist international relations concepts to ethnic conflicts is flawed” (96) and suggests to proceed his analysis at the “group level” in order to compensate for the deficiencies. Still, the validity of the presented concepts is not being questioned, even though they are clearly “flawed”.

Instead of operating with the conflicting actors’ *arguments* of ethnic difference as an unquestioned variable of analysis, one has to start at a micropolitical level “to show the process, by which ‘culture’ or ‘tradition’ - remembered, interpreted, or invented - is transformed into ethnicity, that is, into an ethnic identity and argument, and then that ethnicity is transformed into conflict. It should be readily appreciated that not all culture is

ethnicity and that not all ethnicity is conflict and that the transformation from one to another is not simple, direct, or automatic” (Eller 1999: xii). In the words of Arjun Appadurai: “The challenge is to capture the frenzy of ethnic violence without reducing it to the banal and universal core of inner, primordial sentiments” (2003: 149).

How is then the relationship between conflict and violence constituted? How does violence become a legitimate means of conflict? Even if war may not be the “mere continuation of politics by other means” anymore in the 21st century, as Carl von Clausewitz postulated in 1832 creating a point of reference for many national leaders to follow in the century to come - which processes make violence become a continuation of conflict? What structural precondition lead to this and which mechanisms favour it? After the devastating end of the last World War and after the period of the ideologically based duel for hegemony during the Cold War, the “incentives to frame conflicts in grand ideological terms have disappeared. Even without direct positive incentives to frame conflicts in ethnic terms, this has led to a marked ethnicization of violent challenger-incumbent contests as the major non-ethnic framing for such contests has become less plausible and profitable” (Brubaker & Laitin 1998: 425). *Plausibility* and *profitability* are two key concepts, crucial in the understanding of emerging violent conflicts. Whatever the rhetoric framing may be, it has to be (a) plausible for not directly engaged and interested actors to mobilise them for a case, and (b) profitable for the directly engaged and interested ones in order to be worth the pursuit. Assuming that conflict can lead to violence, game theory provides a paradox illustrating the inevitability of violence: “I can improve my prospects of surviving the conflict if I preemptively suppress those with whom I am in conflict. I sneak up on you before you sneak up on me” (Hardin 1995a: 143). The idea of a preemptive strike has a very sound short-term logic that is feasible for directly engaged and interested actors without long-term concerns for the wealth of a group and also appealing for not directly engaged and interested actors within a group due to its inherent mobilising potential. Using this logic as an *ex post facto* rational choice explanation, however, is usually oversimplifying the situation. Postulating for example that “the Croatsians” preemptively turned on “the Serbs” within the country after having opted for secession completely disregards the various micropolitical dispositions in this context and does not account for the distribution and development of individual attitudes within the population (cf. chapter 5.2.4. and the following), clustering different processes into simple analytical abstractions and blurring causes and effects in the emergence of a violent conflict. Furthermore, if we continue the logic of game theory, we discover that “any change that makes one party to a conflict better off must make the other party worse off. It is possible for both to

become worse off in a pure conflict, but not possible for both to become better off or for one to become better off without harm to the other“ (*ibid.*: 145). The logical conclusion thus must be that, considering a long-term perspective, engaging in a violent conflict can never be of *group* interest, but rather of *individual* interest. To transform individual interest into a case of group concern requires the successful application of a range of mechanisms, that can be identified in *every* situation of a violent social conflict and therefore form a part of the model presented below (cf. chapter 5.2.6.). Also, the consequence of intensified conflict must not be the inevitability of violence, for “[w]e lack strong evidence showing that higher levels of conflict (measured independently of violence) lead to higher levels of violence. (...) Violence is not a quantitative degree of conflict but a qualitative form of conflict, with its own dynamics” (Brubaker & Laitin 1998: 426, cf. also King 2004: 448). This phase shift from non-violent to violent modes of conflict is at the heart of the presented model and solves the mystery of the threshold of conditions (depending on the researcher, ranging from primordial hatreds to critical mass models) necessary for violence to erupt. It also allows us to focus on the problems of reversed conflict *transformation* from violent to non-violent as a precondition for an actual internal conflict *resolution* by the concerned actors.

The trap of perceiving violence as just a higher degree of conflict is an analytical problem difficultly to escape. Kuntzsch himself bases his research on threshold models of social violence, although he initially appreciates the fact that conflating the concepts of conflict and violence and regarding their relationship as a matter of degrees is “[o]ne of the major obstacles” and “fails to account for the qualitatively distinct nature” of violence (Kuntzsch 2007: 5).¹⁷ Understanding the variability and nature of violent episodes in social conflicts requires a critical perspective on the processes of group identification, construction of enemies and selection of victims, the linkage of personal interests with postulated group goals and opportunity structures (cf. King 2004: 448), all issues that can be very different in distinct cases of so called “ethnic violence”. Referring to existing scientific data sets Brubaker & Laitin have “little reason to believe that the processes and mechanisms generating violence in Northern Ireland are the same as those that drive the violence in Sri Lanka. It is not even clear (...) that these are both instances of the same thing (i.e. ethnic violence)” (1998: 431). Concluding this introductory chapter into the field of conflict and violence I shall highlight some central elements of the processes and conditions leading to actual violence, providing a better basis for understanding the complexity of the comprehensive approach presented in this thesis.

¹⁷ As will be shown in chapter 5.2.4., instigated and perpetuated violence functions as an effective element of group crystallisation and as a means of interest implementation by the concerned Capital Cluster Nodes.

Having illustrated the difficulty of relating inter-group violence to collective motivations, we shall shift out attention to intra-group processes that condition and foster violence. Brubaker and Laitin identify several basic mechanisms: in-group policing with its function to enforce certain actions against outsiders, deliberate “staging, instigation, provocation, dramatization, or intensification of violent or potentially violent confrontations with outsiders”, and “ethnic outbidding”¹⁸ (cf. 1998: 433). All of these mechanisms can play an important role in the emergence of violent conflicts, however, as shall be demonstrated later, only the second one (instigated violence) has the actual potential to trigger a process of mutually enforcing collective identifications and thus rendering an initial conflict of individual interests into a group conflict. Yet the proper effect of instigated violence can only be achieved by existing or intentionally created structural preconditions, identified by game theorists as “problems of credible commitments, asymmetric information, and intragroup dynamics” (438), resulting from the lack or collapse of public, civic opportunities of participation, information sharing and knowledge transmission as well as institutions capable of resolving interpersonal conflict situations and/or effectively imposing sanctions. Problems of credible commitment and asymmetric information contribute to a raised level of social uncertainty and thus open spaces for rhetorics and interpretations of incidents as a means of legitimisation and mobilisation by central actors. An important element of intra-group dynamics is the insight, that members of a defined group do not share “a common vision or common interests. (...) Ethnic entrepreneurs, who will be more successful to the extent that their constituents favor ethnic over generic consumption, try to induce the former at the expense of the latter. Such pressures, and constituents’ interdependent responses to them, can trigger ethnification cascades—sharp and self-sustaining shifts from ethnically neutral to ethnically marked activities” (440).

The logically resulting and necessary focus on the actor-based, micropolitical level as a point of reference in the analysis of inter-group conflicts opens up new possibilities and approaches for the understanding of the examined situations (cf. chapter 5.2.2.) and is a precondition to understand the relationship between conflict and violence, as I have argued above. Unfortunately, the dominant “scientific” reality usually does not dare the leap beneath the apparent and beyond the perceived and simply mirrors the constructed labels being attached to conflict descriptions by actors from within. In the following chapter the problem of

¹⁸ Ethnic outbidding “can occur in a context of competitive electoral politics”, yet it “does not always occur, and it does not always pay off as a political strategy when it is attempted”. A fourth intragroup mechanism concerns “the dynamics of recruitment into gangs, terrorist groups, or guerilla armies organized for ethnic violence.” (Brubaker & Laitin 1998: 434). These dynamics will be examined more closely in chapter 5.2.4.

analytical perception, i.e. the unquestioned imagination of conflicts being caused, for instance, by ethnic or religious differences or broadly held grievances, shall be examined more closely.

4.2. The problem of analytical perception

Over a decade ago a man who, as an exceptional case, was twice nominated for and rejected by the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, who already in his earlier works used “a type of language which gives you the illusion of science without any of its substance”,¹⁹ published a book that became a paperback bestseller in many countries. Not only did the ideas of Samuel P. Huntington about an alleged “Clash of Civilizations” shape a large part of public perception on violent conflicts worldwide; as former consultant to the U.S. Department of State and later White House Coordinator for Security Planning for the National Security Council did Huntington indeed have a significant influence on the mainstream of conservative foreign policy in the United States. The conviction that human history cannot be thought in any other way than as a history of collective cultures (cf. Huntington 1998: 49), strikes the reader as a confession of intellectual poverty. Not only does this kind of perception completely ignore the crucial role of individuals in the development of societies, it also reduces the complexity of international affairs to the banality of some kind of board game. The underlying primordial imagination of differences - racist categorisations that are being translated into cultural ones due to requirements of political correctness - becomes clear in those instances, where “a significant correlation between the division of people into culture groups (*Kulturkreise*), based on cultural properties, and their division into races, based on physical properties” is being assumed (cf. *ibid.* 52). In chapter 4.1. I have illustrated the very low amount of interstate wars compared to other (intra-state and transnational) types of conflicts, taking place around local economic and political power interests, which instrumentalise various identifications for mobilisation purposes according to existing opportunity structures. Still, deeply rooted in realist thought, Huntington predicts cultural identity to be the central factor deciding about friends and foes of nation states and their alliances as the main actors of future conflicts (cf. 193). Consider the following statements, postulated five years earlier in the *Foreign Affairs* magazine: “The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. (...) The clash of civilizations will be the battle lines of the future” (Huntington

¹⁹ Lang, Serge (1998): *Challenges*. New York: Springer, p. 43. The quote by Serge Lange (who challenged the nomination for the National Academy of Sciences himself) refers to Huntington's thesis on South Africa being a “satisfied society” in the 1960s, which he postulated in 1968 in *Political Order in Changing Societies*.

1993: 22) and “It is far more meaningful now to group countries not in terms of their political or economic systems or in terms of their level of economic development but rather in terms of their culture and civilization” (23). There is a simple and evident correlation between these conclusions: *If reality is to be constructed in a certain fashion* (grouping countries according to their “culture” and “civilisation”), *then cleavages and sources of conflict will align respectively*. Samuel Huntington himself unconsciously explains the problem of his own analytical perception: Blending out the complexity of an examined system and blurring the specific mechanisms that require attention into an empty bubble of collective entities that fight against each other and as conscious mega-actors deploy puppet-like humans in their battles, is a mechanism that *creates* spaces for identification with the imagined labels and thus potential frontlines. Critics argued that no cultural frontlines actually exist, yet the continued emphasise on singular mega-identities as the only possible anchor for whole populations to attach themselves to, despite the huge diversity of trans-cultural spaces and identifications, has the dangerous potential of facilitating violence along the suggested cleavages.²⁰

A very similar dynamic lies at the heart of the concept of “nations”, emerging as a hubris from the groundwork of ideological rhetorics and micropolitical processes.²¹ As has been argued both by Benedict Anderson (2006 [1988]: 5) and consequently by Georg Elwert (1989: 441), the fundamentals of “nations” as social structures incorporate a certain number of paradoxes: Objectively very young historical phenomena, they are subjectively being depicted as the opposite by nationalist activists. The politically potent power of nationalism contrasts with its theoretical poverty and incoherence, it “never produced its own grand thinkers” (Anderson 2006: *ibid.*). Nevertheless, the history of nations and its universal legitimacy and viability are social facts in the contemporary mainstream perception, constantly reproduced by educational institutions, political entrepreneurs and public media. A history that did not exist, was preached and believed into existence; an entity with its own boundaries, members and prenatal values has become an imagined reality. Common language and a unitary culture are not the constituent elements of a nation, they are the *ex post facto constructed arguments* that give the nation its legitimacy. As will be shown in the following sections, this analytical deficiency of lacking hermeneutic deconstruction is not just a specific of the historical discipline concerning the genealogy of nations and nationalism, it is in fact an intrinsic element of any sustainable large-group construction. Despite the scientific discoveries of

²⁰ Cf. Sen, Amartya (2007) *Identity and violence: the illusion of destiny*. New York: Norton.

²¹ Cf. chapter 6.1. for a further consideration of the problematic causality relationship between the description of a conflict situation and it’s actual re-invention through the unreflected use of specific framing arguments. The theoretical parallels between the concepts of culture, nation and ethnicity shall be debated in chapter 6.2.

singular researchers in this field, the mainstream education - even the one I experienced as a student - reproduced and continues to reproduce many of the politically generated self-conceptions of “ethnic groups” almost without any reflexivity or critical examination. As a matter of fact, many recently emerged²² sub-national social communities worldwide deliberately employ anthropologists to document their identity as a coherent “ethnic group” in order to legitimise their own claims for minority rights. The retrospective documentation of national identity fulfils exactly the same function, it grows its own roots back into the past. “What became ‘France’ in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was nevertheless moulded from a collection of provinces that were earlier both culturally and linguistically distinct” (Giddens 1996: 119). The political elite of one nation had much more in common with the leaders of other nations than for example with a co-national peasant - a fact that even remains true for most cases of the contemporary world system. “Nationalism is essentially a phenomenon of the late eighteenth century and after” (*ibid.*). What is both true for a nation as well as any other kind of constructed large-group: a basic requirement for its continuity is the appropriate label of identification as well as the existence of a certain definition power in place, i.e. a leadership cluster with an interest in sustaining the community.

As briefly touched above, another prominent example of the dilemma of perception is the contrast between the current “scientific” reality concerning social affiliations below or across the national boundary, i.e. within “ethnic” groups, and the diverse ethnohistoric constructions of various of these groups. As Günter Schlee points out: “In some cases, units that were to become the ‘ethnic groups’ of the colonial and postcolonial times, could not be described as ethnic groups at all in pre-colonial days. There were no ethnic groups in certain areas (...) Of course, people there had culture, including language, history, etc., [however, they] lacked the characteristics of ‘groups’” (Schlee 2004b: 7). Without denying the existence of social commonalities of any kind, one cannot dismiss the fact that boundaries are not natural and inviolable realities, but rather *functional means* of other social dynamics, primarily based on shared individual interests. Ethnicity is not a universal principle of classification for mankind, depending on the region of our planet group boundaries are either flexible or non-existent, categories of affiliation overlap and intersect, they are situational, facilitate alliances or re-affiliations of individuals into various associations, they run across clan relationships, religious or other categories. This plurality of ethnic and other taxonomies as well as their

²² “Recently emerged” refers mostly to the colonial period, during which the Western obsession to classify mankind contributed greatly to the creation of classes and “ethnic” groups that were either flexible or totally non-existent before. This aspect will be elaborated more closely on the following pages.

“cross-cutting ties” open spaces for dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. Their specific role in creating cleavages and escalating conflicts, however, can never be generalised and must be subject to examination in each and every particular case (cf. Schlee & Werner 1996: 11). The difficulty of analytical perception of conflict situations arises when asking the question “Who against whom?” - the most easily amenable information provided for an answer usually has a problematic genealogy: Rhetorics of conflict leaders, who mobilise executive potential according to readily accessible frames of identification - e.g. “ethnic” frames, are being absorbed by public media and thus public perception, politicians and eventually scientists in Western industrial societies (cf. 13). The final product of this “Chinese whispers” game is a simplified description and unfortunate categorisation of a reality, that in its origins was nothing but a complex puzzle of various conflict issues (e.g. land, grazing or water rights, just access and participation), multiple levels of alliances and affiliations (e.g. clans, sub-clans, lineages, village communities, economic or social classes) and often concealed conflict dynamics (e.g. power relations, external involvement of Western countries and corporations, illegal arms trade, exploitation of resources). In contemporary scientific practice the question of “Who against whom?” is nevertheless usually being answered by the reactive formulation of “A against B”, *a priori* assuming the natural objectivity and homogenous, singular identity of “A” and “B” as the only variables relevant for a simplified description. Considering the nature of “ethnic” conflicts it is notable to mention what Georg Elwert calls “the invention of ethnicity” (Elwert 1989: 443 et seq.). Only in the 19th century has the concept been clearly set apart from the idea of a “nation”, immediately obscured by the pragmatic interests of colonial administration and anthropological research. The mere denominations of the disciplines “ethnology”, “ethnography” or “ethno-sociology” indicate that ethnic groups constitute a natural and universal matrix of organisation among all human beings, who do not entirely fit into the classification of being a “national” (cf. also Behrends & Schlee 2009: 164). However, if historical evidence suggests that boundary-groups have not always been the norm of social organisation, then collective, antagonistic group identities certainly do not have to be the only norm of future developments of social integration. It seems rather more likely that this kind of labelled categorisations emerged as functional mechanism resulting from the historically developed specific power relations against the background of an industrial, mass-mediated and globalising reality. Also, ethnic labels are often “labels created for administrative purposes” (Eller 199: 10). Elwert provides *inter alia* the example of the *Luvale* in Zambia, who as an ethnic group only came into existence, when the British colonial administration began to collectively assign land according to the principle of “ethnicity”. Various names of modern ethnic groups in precolonial times denoted merely socio-professional groups. “Wer vom

Bauern zum Viehzüchter wurde, gehörte so nicht mehr zu den Bambara, sondern zu den Fulbe" (Elwert 1989: 443), similarly is the historical case of *Hutu* and *Tutsi* in Rwanda and Burundi.²³ Other designations simply meant "the people from here", having been the answer to the colonial administrator's question: "Who are you?"

David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, among other social scientists, realised that "[e]thnic conflict is not caused directly by inter-group differences, 'ancient hatreds' (...) Nor were ethnic passions (...) simply uncorked by the end of the Cold War" (1996: 41). Still, not being able to recognise the mechanisms behind the internal rhetoric framings they refer to "collective fears of the future" as the central cause of intense ethnic conflicts. Unconsciously the "big picture" of group conflict is being reproduced and used as a starting point of argumentation - an argumentation, that apparently cannot escape the "sandbox perception"²⁴ of reality and thus fails to integrate crucial processes into the model (e.g. how particular interest conflicts become constructed as group conflicts). Furthermore, it seems not to distinguish between collective conflict and violence as a qualitatively different phenomenon (cf. the discussion in chapter 4.1.). Interestingly, fifteen pages further in their essay on "containing fear" the authors admit that "environments of fear" are the product of "strategic interactions between and within groups" (56) - clearly an engineered micropolitical dynamic rather than an unresolvable, primordial, all-encompassing collective emotion. Lake and Rothchild appreciate the role of "ethnic activists and political entrepreneurs" in the escalation of violent conflict, however, postulating that they build upon the pre-existing fears (thus contradicting their own arguments) the actual causality of the processes of escalation is being analytically inverted (cf.

²³ The ethnohistoric development of social categorisations in Rwanda will be examined more closely in the following chapters of this paper, exemplifying the presented theoretical approaches.

²⁴ I propose the term "sandbox perception" for the presented problem of analytical perception as an analogy to the concept of a "sandbox environment" in the field of computer technology. Here a certain software is being isolated from the exterior operating system (mainly for security reasons) and operates entirely within the boundaries of the closed "sandbox" it is running in. Similarly, a violent conflict is being framed from within by the central actors through their rhetorics of legitimisation (e.g. "us [A] against 'them' [B]"). If an exterior observer uncritically adopts this rhetoric framing as a basis for a situational analysis, his or her cognition is nevertheless still trapped within the boundaries of perception created from inside. Applied policies resulting from this perception reinforce the framing, having a direct effect on the conflict reality and thus capturing external actors involved with the conflict inside the "sandbox".

An example would be the tragic failure of the UN Security Council to prevent the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. Apart from the fact, that the UN bureaucracy itself hampered any action (cf. chapter 6.2.), a prompt and robust intervention was not considered, because the perception of the escalating situation was indeed one of collective groups fighting on the basis of ancient hatreds against each other. Sadly, even the earliest information provided from the field clearly showed that the perpetrators of the initial violence were poorly armed bands of criminals and unemployed youngsters, organised into paramilitary groups and often paid by alcohol - a threat that would easily have been countered by professional military forces in the first phase of the escalation. A similar development is being revealed by a deeper examination of initial violence involved in the breakup of the former Yugoslavia (cf. chapter 5.2.4.)

chapter 6.1.): As will be demonstrated in chapter 5.2., social fears are not the basis of a conflict, but a *means* of implementing interests and therefore subject to deliberate (re-) production and perpetuation by the conflicting elites. As long as one fails to deconstruct the hubris of “ethnic conflict” and reproduces the propagated unresolvable reality, it indeed remains true that “ethnic conflict can be contained, but it cannot be entirely resolved” (42, cf. also 57). If one, however, manages to escape this primordial perspective and realises that in fact there are no “ethnic conflicts” but instead a variety of actor-based processes framed as such, new possibilities for conflict transformation and eventually resolution will arise. Considering the breakdown of Czechoslovakia as a “sterling example of two ethnic groups, in conflict over the distribution of resources” (46) is an extremely simplifying perspective, reproducing a historically quite recent construction of “ethnic groups” in this case. Perceiving social cleavages and merging them with the observed instances of violence is an analytical inaccuracy, for “[v]iolence in an ethnic or class war may not be ethnic or class violence” whatsoever (Kalyvas 2003: 481). The model that shall be presented in this paper not only clearly suggests that violence fulfils a functional role in legitimising a certain policy and mobilising for its implementation, it also discerns the varying nature of violent instances, exposing “collective violence” as a framing for various, often independent, cases of factional or even personal violence rendered possible in the context of “markets of violence” and impunity (cf. chapter 5.2.7.). The common practice of perceiving collectively labelled (i.e. ethnic, religious, cultural or even civilisational) cleavages and conglomerates of violent instances instead of the underlying ones, “may also cause a bias in reporting, coding, and interpreting evidence” (486). Not surprisingly, “evidence” creates reality retrospectively, and “evidence” usually relies on the scientific method of stipulating definitions of examined phenomena (e.g. “cultural differences”, “ethnic groups” or “ethnic violence”). In contrast to this routinised paradigm, Fearon and Laitin propose as a new approach the initial analysis of *ordinary language* and its external validity, instead of directly jumping to stipulation (cf. Fearon & Laitin: 2000a). Arguing against the opponents of cross-cultural analysis and comparison, they suggest that quantitative studies can be facilitated addressing social scientific questions. A critical examination of the use of ordinary language within a conflict situation also provides a way out of the “sandbox”, for it enables a confrontation of observable micropolitical processes with their framing and internal rhetorics, challenging their validity without blindly absorbing them into the analysis.

This dilemma is illustrated by a variety of scientific approaches trying to define the concept of ethnicity. In his essay “Against the concept of ethnic conflict” Bruce Gilley distinguishes between constructivist and structural approaches, wisely rejecting primordial understandings

of ethnicity altogether (Gilley 2004: 1158). Emphasising that constructed ethnicity is a “moving and contested target” (*ibid.*), he realises the difficulty of using such ethnicity as a useful concept in scientific explanations. Finally he concludes that there “seem to be two possible ways to rescue the concept of ethnic conflict” (1160), being an ends-based concept on the one hand, or a means-based concept on the other hand. The ends-based concept, according to Gilley, might be defined as “sustained and violent conflict by ethnically distinct actors in which the issue is integral to one ethnicity”, such conflicts are supposed to be “purely identificational, often irrational, and deeply impervious to amelioration” (*ibid.*). However, as the author points out himself, collective identities such as religious ones are almost certainly elastic and dynamic, “[a]ncient hatreds are nearly miraculous as social phenomena” (*ibid.*). Means-based concepts could be applied in those rare instances, where “structural deprivation has become so profoundly ethnic-specific that ethnicity has come to be defined precisely in terms of this deprivation” (*ibid.*) in the sense of a “path dependency”. Yet in these cases ethnicity is nothing more than a useful device for the mobilisation of supporters instrumentalised by entrepreneurs in the face of the present deprivation (cf. chapter 5.2.3.). If the identification is structurally derived, then the structural issues themselves represent the critical element of conflict. Both concepts, however inconclusive, seem to be rather a theoretical construction to justify the idea of “ethnic conflict” *per se*, than a useful tool in conflict resolution, for they both imply the reification of argumentative labels from within the “sandbox”. The only alternative, thus, could be offered by a structure-based approach that identifies both the structural sources of conflict and its micropolitical dynamics of escalation which tend to obscure the actual causes. The only logical conclusion, however, is that “[i]n the end, ethnic conflict becomes not a concept at all but a messy descriptive label for a bunch of unrelated phenomena” (1161), hence the role of ethnicity itself is not causal to violent conflicts. Rather, ethnicity provides merely the raw material for conflicting parties struggling for power and framing the conflict in ethnic terms (cf. Brubaker & Laitin 1998: 425). This micropolitical coding practice is made possible, widely available and legitimate due to the general ethnic bias in public perception. The past decades of political and scientific interpretation of violent episodes worldwide created a dominant paradigm, uncritically ascribing labels to conflict parties and constellations and categorising actors accordingly, “typologies were developed to sort conflicts into their respective analytical boxes” (King 2004: 451). Becoming aware of this pre-analytical bias of perception and abandoning it in favour of a critical and comprehensive approach is the first step of a valuable understanding of violent conflict dynamics. The next step will be to transcend the illusion of “group conflict”.

4.3. Transcending the illusion of group conflict

Different scholars apply different analytical frameworks in their examination of violent conflicts, building on the foundation of already existing scientific productions and interpretations. New generations of researchers again filter the existing approaches and combine them into new ones, conveniently choosing between various available schools of thought. Among them, Felix Kuntzsch proposes three different levels of analysis: the inter-group, the group and the individual level (2007: 7). Whatever approach one chooses as appropriate, whatever combination one applies, it still remains undeniable that it all oscillates within the general paradigm of “group conflict”. Any analytical framework that primordially reconstructs “groups” as stable entities and applies those as dependent variables in its analysis, does not only simplify the complexity of a situation, but also contributes to creating an illusion of “group conflicts” that as such do not exist, as shall be argued in this paper. A first step in understanding the issue is to realise the difference between “ethnic groups” and *ethnic categories*, which are mostly based on specific markers either instrumentalised by central actors or imposed by outside observers (cf. Cederman 2002: 441, also: Máiz 2003: 198). These markers may represent random historically crystallised traits of a given society (e.g. local traditions, languages, etc.). Following the constructivist perspective, “groupness” is based primarily on a shared group *consciousness*, which requires a constant work of reproduction by respective policies. A prerequisite for effective large-group identifications as nations or even ethnic groups, in other words collectivities larger than face-to-face communities, is modern mass-mediated flow of information combined with concrete state policies (cf. Hale 2004: 461 and Wieters 2006: 272). Group consciousness is nothing inborn, telepathically shared by thousands of people who have never seen each other, but an imagined perception of shared everyday actions according to a specific habitus. In so-called “ethnic conflicts” or, as a matter of fact, “group conflicts” of any kind, this group consciousness might be indeed developed among an otherwise arbitrarily anonymous collective of individuals by means of constant symbolic reproduction, or it might be simply interpretatively imposed by external observers. There is a scientific debate going on between those scholars, who classify themselves as “instrumentalists” and the ones being mainly called “primordialists”, concerning the nature and durability of individual-level identities once they came into existence (cf. Hale 2004: 462). Both, however, “leave unexamined the microprocesses by which collectivities of interest and sentiment come into existence” (Bentley 1987: 26). These micro-processes that contribute to the building of an ethnically homogenous categorisation applicable on a selected host of

individuals encompass above all the “redefinition of ethnicity as mutually incompatible and antagonistic” (Kuntzsch 2007: 80), in an emerging conflict the imagined consciousness of homogenous group identity superimposes the identified markers it was originally build on.

Consider for example the “cultural traits” among the people of Rwanda. In the years before the genocide in 1994 all social conflicts in the country have been interpreted along ethnic lines. But what are the respective ethnic markers? “There is only one culture. Tutsis and Hutus live in the same regions and villages and they have belonged to the same religious groups” (Neubert 1999: 157), spoke the same language and carried out the same daily practices, intermarried in the course of generations and are not easily distinguished physically. Taking into account the development of the social categories that emerged as an economically defined status and finally consolidated as “ethnic identities”, the only essential criteria of difference remains the *consciousness* of difference, resulting from the label recorded in the individual ID-cards, first introduced by the Belgian colonial administration, discriminating Hutus as the majority of the economically rather low situated population and thus creating “a sense of collective Hutu identity” (Bowen 1996: 6). Paul Kagame’s post-genocidal government’s ban for using the ethnic labels in Rwanda rose a major discussion about the actual ethnicity of Hutu and Tutsi. In fact, however, “it does not matter if any particular group is really an ethnic group or what a real ethnic group is; instead, ethnicity has become so central to social discourse - and social competition - that its salience and effectiveness have become attractive to all sorts of collectivities.” (Eller 1999: 8) Similarly, in Yugoslavia the dominant social divisions before its dissolution were characterised by the divide between rural and urban communities and not ethnicity. Although “media manipulation and appeals to ethnic myths may raise fears and even hostile attitudes, the ones rallying behind the incumbent are not automatically in favor of war” (Kuntzsch 2007: 63). The organisation of violence in emerging conflicts will be examined more closely in chapter 5.2.4., at this point it suffices to say that what is commonly called “ethnic conflict” is not a violent clash between groups where all members fight each other over deeply rooted ethnic hatreds which suddenly begin to surface, but rather a label used to create the illusion of a “group conflict” in order to conceal and legitimise criminal activity, itself in turn serving as a means of legitimisation of the applied rhetorics. This mechanism opens spaces of action, where violence becomes a legitimate means of acquiring profit, and thus creates tragic constraints for initially

not involved individuals to succumb to violence.²⁵ These emerging “opportunity structures” and “markets of violence” hence facilitate the development of a situation that gives the impression of “collective violence”, if perceived from a superficial, structural point of view only (cf. chapter 5.2.7.). Moreover, the retrospectively observed continuity and discreteness of ethnic groups are not necessarily veritable qualities of the concerned groups, but rather *ideologies* being an “essential distinguishing characteristic of ethnic groups and their permutations, as opposed to other human collectivities” (Eller 1999: 15) such as for example social classes. These ideologies are not essentially bound to the actual reality of differences as claimed by ethnic entrepreneurs. In the dismemberment processes of the former Yugoslavia besides religion the central argument of ethnic difference between Serbs, Croats and Bosnians was language, yet a country as “Italy has greater linguistic diversity” (Bowen 1996: 4), if compared. If we consider the case of religion, we will find that each of the concerned populations “includes sizable numbers of the two other religions” (*ibid.*). Ethnicity, i.e. ethnic consciousness, and consequently the roots of violence in the Balkans during the last two decades, are a product and a consequence of modern politics attempting to rally people around nationalist ideologies as a means of particular elites struggling over power and resources. Realising that ethnicity and its component elements are not natural and objective, but derived from a process of elaboration that encompasses a variety of changes and reformulations by national elites and intellectuals (cf. Máiz 2003: 199), one has to consider the functional character of inclusion and exclusion as a mechanism that solidifies a certain version that predominates over other accounts.²⁶

This resulting sense of “groupness” is usually perceived as essentially boundary-specific, however, it is primarily connected to a specific “realm of domination and power” based on modern systems of hegemony, not being merely the effect of the existence of a “physically bounded region” (Barth 2000: 24). In pre-revolutionary France, it is save to say, a peasant would not consider himself to be a “Frenchman”, since his attachment was not to the geographic region of France encompassing a certain number of co-nationals, but to the crown and the ruling elites by virtue of his own social status. Likewise it would be hard to assign a “nationality” to the Bourbons (cf. Anderson 2006: 21), considering their genealogy. As mentioned before, the examined large-group identification only emerged in the context of industrialised, modern, mass-mediated societies, based on census and the idea of

²⁵ An example would be the widely applied strategy to mobilise individuals for the *Interahamwe* militias during the genocide in Rwanda, leaving the potential victims exactly two choices: Either you kill your neighbour and receive his land in reward, or you will be killed yourself. Cf. my interview with Kurt Meissner, who served with the UNAMIR forces in 1994 [transcript min. 34:00 and 40:00].

²⁶ Cf. chapter 5.2.6.

homogenous nation-wide populations. “[B]efore the modern era (...) these labels were not the main source of everyday identity. (...) Conflicts were more often within tribal [or national, ethnic, cultural, religious, etc. - *note*] categories than between them” (6). Since it is clear that different kinds of categories carrying various labels are all based on similar dynamics, it is useful to introduce a general term and define these dynamics according to Georg Elwert as “we-group processes” having the “same driving forces and systemic patterns” (Elwert 1995: 106) beneath their superficial collectiveness. *We-groups* are social structures that have constantly to be reproduced, exhibiting a semblance of homogenous, collective unity framed by specific regional and/or ideological boundaries, but being based on micropolitical processes and having dynamic and flexible properties. In fact, the phase of an emerging conflict reveals an interesting paradox: when rhetoric argumentation for group coherence, stability and continuity is most intense, the configuration of the group identity changes most intensely due to such developments as the imposition of boundaries, exclusion or the need to create alliances. Almost as in the famous double-slit experiment in quantum mechanics,²⁷ the qualities and properties of the examined group change *as an effect* of conscious preoccupation with the nature of the group, either deliberately by proclaimed group leaders, external observers and analysts trying to classify the situation, or as an effect of mutually reactive group formation. *We-groups* often claim to be based on cultural similarities, however, similarities accumulate, as a result of common practice facilitating an efficient coexistence, around a moving centre, there is no clear external boundary. Yet without a boundary there is no group and without a group there is no ethnic group (cf. Behrends & Schlee 2009: 165). This illustration, of course, applies more to sub-state communities than to politically, administratively and militarily isolated nation-states. In any case it demonstrates the difficulty of imputing specific boundaries to social groups, for the epistemological basis for concepts of boundary and groupness of the observer may be quite different than the understanding of the involved. Before analysing group conflicts one should not forget to ask, “is the boundary we impute to a cultural group ‘theirs’ or ‘ours’?” (Cohen 2000: 3).

²⁷ The experimental apparatus of the double-slit experiment consists of a thin plate with two parallel slits cut in it, through which singular photons or electrons are being transmitted, creating an interference pattern on the screen behind the plate. The conclusion of this observation is that even a single particle moves through the slit as a probability *wave*, interfering with itself behind the plate (mathematically it goes through both, none and each slit simultaneously). However, if the activity at one of the slits is being measured, the very act of observing collapses the *wave* quality of the electron and forces it to behave as a *particle*, leaving no interference pattern on the screen. Hence, a different reality is being created simply by observing it. The parallel to our case consists in the awareness that perception, observation, analysis and definition of reality (i.e. of the group-character of violent conflicts or the mere invocation of collective groupness) is not at all a passive act, but has substantial consequences on the reality itself. In fact, the relationship between social reality and paradigmatic models of social reality is always a mutually reinforcing one.

We have highlighted the role of ethnicity as a categorisation utilised as a means of mobilisation. It should, however, not give the false impressions that violent conflicts are merely dynamics between consciously acting elites deploying completely passive masses in the role of irresponsible puppets. This in turn raises the question of motivations to identify with a certain group consciousness and engage in conflict and violence. Classic approaches to ethnic conflict provide little explanation as to “why ethnic motives should be any more powerful than, say, materialist ones” (Hale 2004: 462-463). Ethnicity as an alleged cause of violence would suggest that ethnic heterogeneity and intra-state ethnic pluralism should increase the risk of violence radically. Yet empiric examples prove quite the contrary: “While it is one of the most fundamentally failed states in Africa, Somalia is also the most homogeneous in terms of ethnicity and religion, whereas its neighbor, Kenya, with 29 languages and diverse ethnic groups, has remained relatively stable” (Schlee 2007: 42). Examining the motivation to engage in violence one would expect issues deeply rooted in individual personalities to be at stake. If my core identity is being threatened, I am losing the foundations of my self-perception and thus employ any means possible to protect this personal identity. Evidence suggests, however, that social identity is an aspect of our personality that concerns our interface with others, the surface of our exterior points of contact and not “any real or imagined ‘deeper’ aspects of our personalities. If ‘identity’ is superficial in this sense, so are the ‘differences’ which constitute it” (Schlee 2004b: 12). Of course structural inequalities threatening essential possibilities of personal life expectations are a powerful and legitimate motivation to engage in fighting against those inequalities. Nonetheless, structural inequalities within a society usually either do not affect specific ethnic, cultural or religious matters, or their are deliberately targeted on individuals associated with a specific layer of identification. In the latter case the *we-group* label turns into an identifier of concerned individuals in terms of a “path dependency”, as explained in chapter 4.2. Still, the dependency of the label refers to the structural deprivation, inequality or strong interest of the concerned persons. The motivation or interest is thus primarily to be found in the relation between individual actors and the structural problems they face. The formation of groups (irrespectively of their interpretation and association with ethnic markers) is a process *resulting* from the original conflict issue and not a cause itself. “We cannot define group interests before clearly circumscribed groups have emerged. If, in a situation of group formation, the composition of an emerging group changes, also their perception of their interests might change” (Schlee 2000a: 6). The conditions of higher or lower time stability of *we-groups* are to be found in the field of power relationships and property relations, that are decisive to the structural problems at hand (cf. *ibid.*: 5).

Unfortunately, the current scientific mainstream dealing with social conflicts seems to be trapped in a twofold dilemma: Basing their research on quantitative data that captures relevant violent events according to their scale or intensity, scholars assign a bulk of qualitatively not distinguished incidents to collectively acting entities, being either an analytical abstraction of the observer or the materialised rhetoric framing uncritically absorbed from political entrepreneurs engaged in the conflict. A situation is hence categorised as a conflict between contiguous groups, the conclusion of the analysis is a clash between these groups by reason of the groupness itself. This unfortunate logical standoff becomes clearly pointless when confronted with the empirical reality: “Not all contiguous groups fight - far from it” (Fearon & Laitin 2000b: 851). The tendency to take discrete, internally homogenous and externally bounded groups for granted and treat them as basic constituents and fundamental units of social life and its scientific analysis is a central characteristic of so called “culturalistic” approaches, as exemplified by the theoretical framework of Samuel P. Huntington in chapter 4.2. As a staunch opponent of any approaches reducing the study of ethnicity to the study of ethnic groups Rogers Brubaker calls the problematic consequence of this tendency “groupism” (Brubaker 2004: 8). The trap of the analytical “sandbox” seems to be that ethnic common sense as generated in social conflicts ceases to be a key element of what should actually be explained and instead becomes an instrument used to explain things *with* (cf. *ibid.*: 9). “Ethnic conflict” is thus implicitly understood as a conflict *between ethnic groups*, although it actually is a conflict *framed* in ethnic terms. “Groupness” is not an intrinsic basic quality of social life, but rather a dynamic *variable* that can have different parameter-values: Groupness can *happen* as a possible result of framing processes, yet in other cases “high levels of groupness may *fail* to crystalize, despite the group-making efforts of ethnopolitical entrepreneurs, and even in situations of intense elite-level ethnopolitical conflict” (12).

Thinking social conflicts in terms of “groupness” also lumps together the dizzying combinations of identifications and actions possible on various levels and different social fields of interest. Most of contemporary violent social conflicts are being framed according to collective labels on a national level, however, “the salience of local cleavages is ubiquitous in ground-level descriptions of civil war (...) references to the disjunction between center and periphery are present in almost every descriptive account” (Kalyvas 2003: 479). Practices of ethnic or national coding nourish the large-scale “master cleavage” by creating spaces for local violence as a legitimate means of small-scale dispute resolution. This local violence, mostly unrelated to the ideological issues at heart of the master cleavage undergoes a conceptual reinterpretation by central conflict actors in order to legitimise respective policies. Cases as the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 or instances of ethnic cleansing show the relevance of this

mechanism, which permits a secondary selection of victims “based on individual characteristics unrelated to group identity” (482). Countless accounts indicate that in extreme cases of violence and murder perpetrators and victims actually knew each other personally. It is important to stress and keep in mind this interpersonal level of action during a violent conflict, which also indicates the crucial role of individual responsibility beyond the idea that masses are being instrumentalised by elites in pursuit of power. Indeed, the mobilisation of a certain amount of a population is a prerequisite for the successful instigation of a violent conflict as a means of gaining power by elites, however, civilians committing violence still remain active *subjects* rather than objects of structural processes. Their depiction as manipulated victims, *ex post facto* aggregated into other-directed groups (“the Serbs”, “the people”) misconceives the personal, *intimate* property of social violence - in every emerging conflict there are individuals instigating the first phase of violence, their “participation is essential to transform animosity into violence” (*ibid.*). There are small groups of combatants, often not even properly organised as combat units, whose atrocities boost the whole concept of “ethnic warfare”. Ethnic wars are not wars of all against all, of aggregated masses of individuals who suddenly decided to make a single social identification the only relevant aspect of their lives and slaughter their neighbours due to a binary difference. Basing his research on substantial empirical evidence and theoretical arguments that will be considered in detail in chapter 5.2., John Mueller comes to the conclusion that “ethnic war essentially does not exist” (Mueller 2000: 42).

What are hence the perspectives for the scientific field of ethnic conflict studies? As is demonstrably the case, scientific paradigms reach their peak of popularity when their empirical justification is at its weakest. In fact, even if one accepts the invalid division of human societies into “ethnic groups” as the sole relevant factor of social identification, the consequent fact remains that inter-ethnic co-operation is the norm, not conflict (cf. Gilley 2004: 1156). However, evidence suggests that occupation or social class are far more substantial identifications than ethnicity.²⁸ “All things considered, there is a strong case for severely limiting the field of ethnic conflict studies, if not abandoning it altogether” (*ibid.*). An alternative to the surprisingly robust substantialist tendency that Brubaker calls “groupism” would be its direct opposite: a constructivist perspective. Unfortunately the basic insights of constructivism as an epistemological approach “is today too obviously right, too familiar, too readily taken for granted, to generate the friction, force, and freshness needed to push

²⁸ Even after decades of social engineering by colonial administrations, subsequent governments, media and social scientists, in Africa still around 40% of individuals identify themselves by occupation or class, as opposed to 25% by ethnicity (cf. Gilley 2004: 1156).

arguments further and generate new insights. One symptom of this intellectual slackness is that one often finds constructivist and groupist language casually conjoined” (Brubaker 2004: 3). Furthermore, theoretical frameworks reactively emerged as a mutual contradiction often lack the comprehensive appreciation of relational, processual and dynamic elements of social reality. As has been illustrated by the theoretical introduction in this chapter, neither can a substantialist idiom of bounded groups, nor an idiom of individual choice fully meet the requirements of a coherent and useful model of emerging violent conflicts. Individual practice is conscious and intended, yet it is rooted in the social field it emerges from. It is never a total manifestation of a free will independent from its cognitive and habitual foundations, nor is it completely determined by socialisation and external circumstances. In the following chapter we shall introduce the theoretical toolkit of Pierre Bourdieu, that as the only existing sociological approach fully appreciates this relational interplay and dynamics between the conditioning structures and the generative dispositions of individual actors located in specific social fields. Based on this comprehensive perception of social life we will then apply the gained insights on the processes and dynamics of emerging violent conflicts and establish a model that both encompasses the crucial micropolitical dynamic and allows a critical and reflective integration of empirical observations, taking into account the importance of conflict-specific developments without simplifying the analysis to an improper abstraction.

5. Theoretical cornerstones and the way towards a new understanding

5.1. Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Practice as an approach to conflict analysis

Much of the contemporary debate on group conflict revolves around the various approaches to define the central concepts seemingly at heart of every scientific analysis in this realm. In most cases approximations to the topic start with the intuitive perception of what is being transmitted to the analyst via media reports, informants, or previous disquisitions, but originates from those actors in a given conflict, who possess the monopoly of interpretation within their field of acting. This conceptual transmission comprises the subtle and usually unconscious connotations of terms as: identity, ethnicity, social structure; the context-specific manifestations of these ideas (eg. closed and disparate group-identities, Tutsi, Arab, class, elite, social strata connected to block-voting mechanisms, etc.); as well as the causality and internal logic attached to these ideas (e.g. incommensurate individual identities in interpersonal relations, reasoning and argumentation with reference to diachronically projected genealogies, migration dynamics, myths and claimed biological differences, historical interpretations supporting claims of social positions, etc.). While the pure instrumental rhetorics of these concepts, as applied by the central actors within the conflict situation, are being almost entirely reproduced by observers such as international media, the scientific community further processes this information in two possible ways: it either scrutinises the application of the concepts according to the symbolic power of scientific interpretation (it "corrects" the internal claims and arguments according to factual evidence in order to produce workable analytical notions) or it challenges the nature of the concepts (questioning their objectivity and highlighting their subjective constitution) to open new spaces for scientific handling of these now modified categories or it does both. In any case, *categories of ethnopolitical practice* are being adopted, though modified, as *categories of social analysis* (cf. Brubaker 2004: 10). In rarely fully satisfying efforts to find suitable definitions many authors agonise over properties and characteristics of concepts such as ethnicity, debating for example the paradoxical nature of the interplay between objective and subjective qualities of a given category (as for example Kuntzsch 2007: 14, *inter alia*). Although a clarification of the ideas one intends to apply as his or hers analytical cornerstones is commendable and necessary, the debate whether a certain reality is actually "real" or "constructed" (and how so?) does not have a teleological sense as such - it might be nice to present an alternative perspective on a given situation, yet without grasping the underlying

mechanisms responsible for the construction of the concepts (frames) it cannot contribute much to a solution of a conflict.

As discussed in chapter 2, any practice resulting from a specific perception has a consequence on the reality perceived in a specific way. Herein also lies the crucial function of scientific engagement, which usually pretends to be undesigned in regard to the observed reality (preaching some kind of objective existence on its own totally outside the subject of analysis). The Theory of Practice *as* practice counters positivistic materialism that epistemology is always a construction of knowledge and not simply its mere passive notice, and reminds intellectual idealism that this construction rests upon the system of structured and structuring dispositions, that is being formed by practice and always oriented towards practical functions (cf. Bourdieu 2008: 97). I thus firmly believe that any scientific approach to a given situation has to be fully aware of its mutual effect in regard to the approached issue. Thus, any conflict analysis must have a teleological aspect at its foundation, ideally the improvement of the situation for a broad as possible majority of involved human beings. In this regard I argue for a kind of *ignostic*²⁹ position towards the discussion of the specific nature of originally rhetoric frames, nevertheless being *structurally* reproduced as feasible concepts. It does not matter at all, *if* “ethnicity” in a specific case has objective foundations or is a subjective construction (the question itself implies that its existence is perceived and appreciated as real, irrespectively of its causes), rather it makes sense to ask *how* “ethnicity” raises as an effective social framing mechanism. In order to fully understand violent conflict dynamics we need to focus on a *functional* approach exposing the mechanisms that have real consequences framed in “ethnic” terms.

It seems clear that the next move must be to step down from the abstract analysis of various concepts *per se* to the examination of the interpersonal level of interaction. “Identity” as an idea arises from the tangible dynamics between specific human individuals in multiple relations. Rogers Brubaker suggests that a feasible way of understanding the function of identity as an idea is to break down the abstraction into its constituting “clusters of less

²⁹ Originally introduced by rabbi Sherwin Wine, the term *ignosticism* generally describes the theological position, that on one hand the question of the existence of God, on the other hand the discussion of the concept of God itself is considered meaningless, for its interpretation has no consequence on the truth itself (whatever it may be). In my personal interpretation my declaration as an *ignostic* implies a basic refusal to even engage in the discussion about the existence or the nature of God, since it makes absolutely no practical difference to the reality perceivable by my human senses, and is thus completely irrelevant.

Similarly, an *ignostic* position towards the reality or nature of specific rhetoric frames as “ethnicity” presupposes the realisation that a mere definition of a functional social tool does not help to understand the mechanisms behind it. As I am interested in the social *function* of the idea of God in its various conceptualisations (which undeniably has enormous consequences throughout human history), I am interested in the *function* of the idea of “ethnicity”, refusing to recognise both God and “ethnicity” as objectively given (since I cannot know in one case and I don’t care much in the other).

congested terms: identification and categorization, self-understanding and social location, commonality and connectedness" (Brubaker 2004: 4). This is a glance in the right direction, for it brings us to the realm of interpersonal dynamic, individual positions and dispositions, that in its interplay with the social structures in a given field produce the mechanisms at the core of violent conflicts. Marcus and Fischer emphasise that "[f]ocusing on the person, the self, and the emotions (...) is a way of getting to the level at which cultural differences are most deeply rooted" (1999: 46). Those differences are not rooted in an essentially static reality that certain frames try to depict, but in the reality that creates the specific frames of difference in the first place - a reality that is primarily dynamic, changing and subject to the practice of relevant actors. Outlining the central historical ethnographic approaches on this level of analysis, Marcus and Fischer highlight the role of psychodynamic studies as well as realist perspectives. On the one hand, "Freud demonstrated that we can trace out systematic interrelationships between conscious understandings of social relations, unconscious or 'deeply structured' dynamics, and the ways ambiguous, flexible symbols are turned into almost deterministic patterns of cultural logic" (*ibid.*: 48 et seq.). Accordingly, the mark of contemporary psychodynamic science is the display of discursive elements on a self-reflective, emotional and behavioural level of analysis, beneath public cultural forms. On the other hand, in sharp contrast, realist ethnographies "draw their initial frames of analysis from the public commonsense world" (*ibid.*: 54), thus referring to the (subjectively perceived) social structures of the "objective" (in the sense that it constitutes the field outside and in between subjective actors) world. Some modernist approaches rudimentary combine these perspectives, yet only the sociological toolkit of Pierre Bourdieu manages to create a feasible analytical bridge between the seemingly impregnable antagonisms of the individual and the social, the subjective and objective, the symbolic and the material (cf Bourdieu & Wacquant 2006: 19). In the following the basic structure and logic of this sociology shall therefore be presented.

5.1.1. Overview, concepts and function: Bourdieu in a nutshell

The central concept of Bourdieu's theoretical toolkit is the notion of *habitus* - an analytical device that grants human practice a systematic dimension and an inner coherence, transcending the fragmented demarcations of scientific disciplines (cf. *ibid.*: 50). It represents a linking system of collective, historically acquired and unconsciously functioning patterns of

thinking and filters of perception. The habitus produces schemes of action and valuation and represents the implementation of the social position of a person according to the appropriate style of life, i.e. one's dispositions (internalised by the habitus) within the social field. It is important to stress, that the habitus is a socially constructed system of structured *and* structuring elements reflecting the inner dispositions, acquired by practice.³⁰ One of the main advantages of this model is that it overcomes the dilemma of determinism versus free will: Social actors are knowing actors. Even if they are subject to external determinisms (e.g. the structure of the social field they inhabit), they contribute to the efficacy of the determining factors by actively structuring these determinisms (cf. *ibid.*: 204). Thus *symbolic power*³¹ arises as a social force that operates as structure, yet still remains a dynamic mechanisms dependent on the practice of actors operating themselves within the framework of symbolic power. The bridging translation, so to say the channel for symbolic power to flow between actors and the social field, is the habitus - a connective link between the individual psychic structure and the socioeconomic circumstances, fulfilling the function of securing the power beneath the surface of human consciousness. In other words, people seem voluntary to do what they have to do in order to maintain a functional social system. In order to escape the illusion of free and independent action on the one hand and the "realism of the structure" on the other hand, "it is necessary to pass from the *opus operatum* to the *modus operandi* (...) and to construct the theory of practice, or, more precisely, the theory of the mode of generation of practices, which is the precondition for establishing an experimental science of the dialectic of the internalization of externality and the externalization of internality, or, more simply, of incorporation and objectification" (Bourdieu 2000: 72). The habitus is hereby not to be confused with notions of personality or identity, it is rather a "subjective but not individual system of internalized structures, schemes of perception, conception, and action" (86). How does all this relate to conflict theory or the idea of "ethnicity" in so-called violent group-conflicts? As explained above, Bourdieu argues that external (objective, yet subjectively perceived) conditions of existence embedded in the social field are being mediated by

³⁰ According to Bourdieu, this dichotomy within the concept reflects its dual identity as *opus operatum* (structured work) on the one hand and as *modus operandi* (structuring behaviour, policy) on the other. The elementary living condition of the social situation defines the *opus*, while the *modus* represents a generative principle for the different forms of practice (outcomes). Both are two faces of the habitus, which itself transposes the social to the individual and vice versa. The concept of the habitus will be examined more closely in the following chapter (5.1.2.).

³¹ Bourdieu's notion of *symbolic power* is closely related yet not entirely equivalent to Michel Foucault's *fourth face of power* [labelled as such by Peter Digeser (1992) "The Fourth Face of Power", in: *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 54, No. 4, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 977-1007] or Louis Althusser's concept of *ideology* [e.g. (1970) "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses", in: *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays* (1971), New York and London: Monthly Review Press, pp. 121-176].

(subjective, yet not individual) systems of perception, filters of classification (*opus operatum*), and generate certain dispositions in different (individual) actors, which in turn enable them to act in specific ways through practice as a means of structuring the external conditions.³² Carter Bentley first extrapolated from this analysis something he called a “practice theory of ethnicity”, hypothesising that “consciousness of affinities of interest and experience embodies subliminal awareness of objective commonalities in practice. (...) It provides the objective grounding for ethnic subjectivity sought by both primordialists and instrumentalists and, in addition, it accounts for phenomena they cannot” (Bentley 1987: 27). In this approach the theory of practice is employed as a means of explaining “the conjunction of affect and instrumentality in the phenomenon of ethnicity” (28). However, on the creative side of the dichotomy of the individual-social relationship (activating the habitus as a *modus operandi*) lies the work of *practice*, which can only be fully understood through the instrumentalisation of *capital* as a means of achieving a desired position in a certain field. Capital in the sense of Bourdieu should not be reduced to merely economic manifestations, it encompasses all different kinds of resources one has at his or hers disposal that have continuously to be invested and distributed appropriately. In its effect, all forms of capital are nothing else than “accumulated labor” (Bourdieu 1986: 241) that required time. They are all convertible into each other. Depending on the field in which it is functionally embedded, the strategy of accumulating resources in fact produces capital in the following fundamental guises: as *economic capital*, as *cultural capital*, and as *social capital* (cf. 243 et seqq.).

Economic capital is a resource that includes different forms of material wealth, monetary capital and assets. It is institutionalised by proprietary rights and directly convertible into money. In this context one of the most important criticisms of Bourdieu is the neglect of other socially important forms of capital within the realm of social, political, and economic sciences. For a comprehensive understanding of social relations one has to turn against the ethnocentric perspective of economic rationalism that classifies all other systems as absurd and condemned to fail (yet surprisingly they often do not fail but reveal unexpected consequences). Since economic capital can not only be invested into other forms of capital, but is often itself a result of appropriately exerted non-economic resources, the formula has to be supplemented by other forms of capital.

³² Note that the logical conclusion is that relations between individual actors can thus never be directly *interpersonal*. Any form of interaction always has to pass through the inevitable translation of the habitus and the embedded structures in order to be perceived by the human mind.

Cultural capital is, on certain conditions, convertible into economic capital and may be institutionalised in the forms of educational qualifications. It can exist in the three following forms: “in the *embodied* state, i.e. , in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the *objectified* state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.) (...); and in the *institutionalized* state” (243).

Embodied cultural capital may comprise aspects as acquired abilities, skills, competences, techniques, knowledge, rhetorical capabilities, and so on. It is bound to the body and therefore to the person; adopted by education and represents an integral part of the dispositions working through the habitus. Embodied cultural capital can only be accumulated by time (learning) and often requires the investment of an appropriate amount of economic capital. However, as a product of daily socialisation it may be disguised in its function as capital and can be acquired quite unconsciously, thus being a potent vehicle for the instrumentalisation by actors capable of controlling the social distribution of a specific cultural capital, here in its function as *symbolic* capital. However, the distribution of capital in a social field is primarily determined by the “structure of the field”, which is “the source of the specific effects of capital” (246) enabling relevant actors to influence this structure.

The objectified state of cultural capital is transmissible in its materiality (transfer of paintings, writings, tools, etc.), the investment for its appropriation, however, can be of economic nature (buying machines) or presuppose a certain amount of (embodied) cultural capital (using the machines in accordance with their specific purpose). It should be taken into account that cultural capital in its objectified state exists only insofar as it is “appropriated by agents and implemented and invested as a weapon and a stake (...) in the field of the social classes-struggles in which the agents wield strengths and obtain profits proportionate to their mastery of this objectified capital, and therefore to the extent of their embodied capital” (247).

The institutionalised state of cultural capital is the objectification of embodied cultural capital in the form of, for instance, academic qualifications (titles). A title is considered legitimate cultural capital, it distinguishes the titleholder from the autodidact. The institutional recognition of academic qualification makes it also possible to “establish conversion rates between cultural capital and economic capital by guaranteeing the monetary value of a given academic capital” (248) as well as exchanging titleholders on a comparative base.

Social capital exists in the form of social relations (“connections”) and results from the exploitation of a “durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (248), in which the actor is entangled and can refer to in need of support. Social capital constitutes those resources, which are based on affiliations to a

group (i.e. collective group labels, families, clubs, elites, political parties, ethnic groups, nations, etc.). It can only be preserved and extended through persistent relational work and reproduction in form of acts of exchange in which recognition is continuously affirmed and reaffirmed. Because social capital follows the logic of knowledge and acknowledgement it therefore always functions as *symbolic* capital. These relationships may exist either in and institutionalised form (organisations) exhibiting specific labels (family names, classes, ethnic, national or religious denominations, etc.) or informally “in a practical state, in material and/or symbolic exchanges which help to maintain them” (249). What is notable in the context of violent social conflict, is that the relevance of social capital is independent from the actual size of the network, but rather relies on the amount of connections a given actor can effectively mobilise, as well as on the volume of the capital (in any given form) that can be provided by the mobilised individuals and utilised for the commonly perceived interest. Thus different strategies of network exploitation that manifest themselves as mechanisms of group formation (in- and exclusion, purification, redefinition, etc. - cf. chapter 5.2.6.) entail the redefinition and alteration of group boundaries and identities that are made possible by the flows of social capital. The process becomes even more interesting when considering a fundamental property of group existence: the mechanism of delegation, which is inevitable for any kind of organised collectivity to exist in a functionally efficient manner; enables the group to concentrate the totality (or at least the disclosed majority) of existing social capital “in the hands of a single agent or a small group of agents and to mandate this plenipotentiary, charged with *plena potestas agendi et loquendi*, (...) to exercise a power incommensurate with the agent’s personal contribution” (251).

The various types of capital can be derived from economic capital, though the transformation of one form into another requires (as opposed to economic exchange in the narrow sense) a more subtle approach that also considers the variable of time as an essential part of the equation. Paradoxically at first sight, the specific effects of non-economic forms of capital can be achieved only to the extent that they conceal the fact that economic capital is at their root. The investment of social or cultural capital becomes worthwhile only as far as it is able to disguise its nature as a transformed type of economic capital, which in turn it seeks to acquire. Bourdieu even goes so far as to postulate that the transformation of forms of capital into each other follows an equivalent of the “principle of the conservation of energy” (being a fundamental premise in the standard model of modern physics): “profits in one area are necessarily paid for by costs in another (so that a concept like wastage has no meaning in a general science of the economy of practices). The universal equivalent, the measure of all

equivalences, is nothing other than labor-time (in the widest sense)” (253) accumulated in the form of capital on the one hand, and required for cross-capital transformation on the other hand. It seems to me, however, that this principle only applies as long as the social interaction takes place within the framework of a functioning social field with its structurally inherent rules and laws. Yet emerging violent conflicts manifest themselves due to the collapse or the lack of institutional and structural mechanisms capable of processing social conflicts. In these cases the distribution of capital does not only shift within a society, its total volume may also change irrespectively of the labor-time equivalent. Still, a crucial quality of any type of capital, that has already been mentioned several times, persists and even rises in importance in situations of conflict dynamics: *symbolic capital*.

The concentration of symbolic capital is a condition for (or at least an accompaniment of) all other forms of accumulation (i.e. concentration). In fact, it is a random quality (a random type of capital), as long as it is apprehended by the categories of perception of a given social collectivity (cf. Bourdieu 1998: 108 et seq.). Usually it includes respect, honour, prestige, reputation and acknowledgement – all qualities that can be transformed into economic capital (within the appropriate social framework). Especially in non-industrial societies a good reputation can produce material benefits. The further a social structure evolves into a complex system requiring functional mechanisms of authority and legitimacy for its continued existence, the more symbolic capital is being allocated into these structures, being at the disposal of the actors upholding the structures. In consequence, it is the political and legal system of a state that is the ideal place for the concentration and execution of symbolic power. From a diffuse symbolic capital that is based only on collective recognition evolves an *objectified* symbolic capital that is codified and bureaucratised by the state (cf. 113), the only instance that disposes of means for the implementation and internalisation of principles of perception and classification, which in turn result from the state’s own structures. Thus legitimacy is being created. Although the role of symbolic capital, its concentration and significance for social processes is best exemplified at the level of statehood, it can nevertheless be observed in any kind of group dynamics. The model presented in the following chapter 5.2. will demonstrate how symbolic capital functions in the creation of legitimisation and mobilisation, identification, group crystallisation and perceptual transformation of conflict framings (from the roots of actor-based conflicts of interests to the “reality” of large-group conflicts) within the framework of a social field, in which various actors with a specific interest dispersion regarding a certain form of capital are embedded. The concept of symbolic capital enables us to analytically expose the actual quality of

descriptive framings and categorisations as rhetoric arguments from within the mechanisms of a violent conflict rather than absorb them as content-related ontological realities, in other words, to recognise their *functional* relevance and repeal their *structural* claims. Symbolic capital invested by social actors and analytically understood as a commodity within a larger economic system that transcend the narrow and incomplete perspective of material economy, fulfils its role in preventing “the economy from being grasped as an economy, i.e. as a system governed by the laws of interested calculation, competition, or exploitation” (Bourdieu 2000: 172). Bridging the limited ethnocentric perspective of an economy based solely on financial and material exchange and enhancing it with a more comprehensive approach that includes non-material resources, it becomes clear (against arguments of irrationality directed at the actions of ethnic entrepreneurs or political, religious elites) that “practice never ceases to conform to economic calculation even when it gives every appearance of disinterestedness by departing from the logic of interested calculation (in the narrow sense) and playing for stakes that are non-material and not easily quantified” (177, cf. also Bourdieu 2008: 215 et seqq.). Symbolic capital is always part of the overall economic capital in the *broader* sense. The only way to escape the naive ethnocentric illusion of economism is to “extend economic calculation to *all* the goods, material and symbolic” (Bourdieu 2000: 178), that are available as exploitable and investable resources on the social market. Accounting for a “balance-sheet” (181) of symbolic and material profits and expenditures the rationality of conduct beneath the surface of initially perceived irrationality and absurdity, that hampers a full understanding of a violent conflict situation, suddenly becomes clear, opening new spaces for action. Thus we can discover that symbolic capital, drawing its value from its convertibility into economic capital, is a crucial form of accumulation *especially* relevant in situations of exchange, where undisguised economic capital is not appreciated. Yet its accumulation implies considerable labour as well as material and symbolic investments only reasonable over an appropriate period of time within a given social field. Since we now have an insight on the basic means of practice, in the following chapter the structural conditions of social dynamics and the specific dichotomy of subjectivity versus objectivity, action and determination, that are being reflected in the pivot of the habitus, shall be examined more closely in order to advance a new and comprehensive approach to conflict analysis.

5.1.2. A fish in the water: Habitus and the social world

Theories in the disciplines of social and political sciences rarely cross the rim of a reductionist systemic perspective, or they are concerned with the behavioural properties of individuals, usually not able to bridge the gap between the subjective and the objective, the individual and the social. As is the case with applied theories in any scientific discipline, the fact of reductionism is not a bad thing *per se*, as long as it provides a useful tool capable of explaining certain events and processes. In fact, most of the progress in scientific, technological, industrial, and economic realms of human society has been possible only due to simplifying theoretical models capable of breaking down the complexity of reality into traceable and reproducible structures. Applying such models in physics, chemistry, medicine, computer sciences or various other fields enabled us to understand the world we live in better, solve an incredible amount of problems and extend our capabilities in an enormous way. With the rising complexity of understanding former blind alleys have been transcended and, of course, various new obstacles resulting from the higher degree of knowledge discovered. Yet despite all the insights in different domains of research we seem to be lacking a fundamental understanding of social interaction, that is obviously based on the factors defined by the biological predispositions of human beings and the mechanisms of socialisation, perception and construction, internalisation and practice, all highly variable but delimited by the hardware of the human mind. Over the years paradigms in the domains of social and political sciences shifted and evolved according rather to the current ideological and dogmatic predominance than due to its empirical verification and practical application. As a matter of fact, constructing a theory of “the social”, i.e. the basic understanding of the dynamics and mechanisms that arise in the space between human beings as a result of their mutual perception and subsequent (inter)action, implies to understand understanding itself, to construct the reasons of construction, to perceive the nature of perception, or to create a model for something that is a creation of the human mind itself. Obviously, it is not possible to escape this vicious circle and to take the position of an observer *beyond* the observed, since the way *how* sociality is being perceived *defines* the ways sociality functions. If a certain paradigm, absorbed by the vast majority of a social collectivity, postulates that the essential factor defining the existence and interaction of human beings is a supernatural power that governs the predetermined fate of every life, than social life will evolve respectively. The same applies for any other theoretical paradigm: be it a *bellum omnium contra omnes*, a society based on individualism and free will, etc. It is so apparent and obvious that social theory does

not and cannot *describe* a given reality of human interaction, it can only *invent* a reality depending on the usefulness and intention of its supporter. Thus social theory is not progressing as much in respect to its epistemological evolution as rather in its adequacy of application. The question is not if any given social paradigm was right or wrong, but rather if it was useful, *functionally efficient* in its application onto the social world. A change in social theory goes hand in hand with a change in social reality and the causality is always bi-directional. Since sociality is not a naturally given thing but an abstraction constructed by the interplay of human minds with nevertheless quite real consequences, it merely mirrors the abstraction of theory that is trapped in the illusion of describing something that exists independently outside of the practice of its own creation. If, in a nutshell, social reality is not independent from social theory but intrinsically entangled, what is the principle generating a certain perception and not another one? Why is a social reality perceived as such and why does it reflect its perception once so defined? Logically, the question of *why* has a functional character demanding a causal motivation: When the consequence of A is 1 and the consequence of B is 2, I chose A if I want 1 and B if I want 2. What emerges here and shall be considered further in the following is a fundamental principle of human practice that lies at the heart of sociality: *interest*. Now, if I postulate that interest is the core element of social interaction, in accordance with the above, I do not claim this to be a naturally given truth hidden beneath the layers of reality and finally discovered. As in all approaches of social and political science this is a mere intellectual abstraction, yet in combination with the analytical toolkit presented in this chapter it opens vast spaces for a new understanding of complexities that have so far been ignored by either discounting them as irrational or judging them morally and thus placing them off-limits for critical analysis. Interest as a primary principle governing the relations between the mind, the habitus, the social structure and practice (all understood as mere analytical abstractions) also leads the way towards a new, comprehensive and universally applicable perspective on the dynamics of violent social conflicts, as it will be presented in chapter 5.2. Why a new perspective? Precisely because of the one aspect of theory formation already explained in this paper at various points: Theory does not just describe reality, it invents reality and should therefore openly declare its normative quality. Conflict analysis is not *l'art pour l'art* - it is an instrument to create possibilities for conflict transformation.

Interest, however, is never an independent manifestation of an individual's free will. Practice, as a physical implementation of interest, is determined by the inner dispositions of an individual structured by the genealogy of his or hers interaction with the surrounding social

field. On the other hand, practice should not, implicitly or explicitly, be treated as a mechanical reaction to the current circumstances (cf. Bourdieu 2000: 73). Practice is not the manifestation of an autonomous mind nor the predetermined consequence of a certain stimulus. It is a response of the habitus, yet, of course, it “may be accompanied by a strategic calculation” (76). The concept of the habitus has already been briefly explained in the previous chapter, still, it is often subject to misinterpretations and incorrect use even within scientific literature referring to Bourdieu’s sociology. Bourdieu himself offers dozens of definitions throughout his works, however, they are all complementary and to be grasped only in the wider context of the entanglement with the dichotomy of the subjective and the objective. At one point he defines the habitus as:

“systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures (...) collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor” (Bourdieu 2000: 72, cf. also: Bourdieu 2008: 98).

The habitus is a “strategy-generating principle” (*ibid.*), reflecting the internalisation of social conditions that takes place via processes of adaptation, learning and conditioning. It is being determined by (collective) class-specific systems of classification. Social provenance, one’s childhood and the collective history of the family and the class as well as many other aspects of perception form the habitus – a fact that is also well elaborated in psychoanalysis. These structured patterns of the habitus produce the basic schemes of classification and thus are the fundamental principles of construction and valuation of the social world. The acquired dispositions not only form and control the way of thinking and the individual perspective, but also one’s behaviour and everyday actions, enabling agents to deal with the dynamic changing reality of different situations. Bourdieu’s theory of practice combines the structural influence of one’s class-affiliation with utilitarian strategies of the actor, who applies the same dispositions in always-different situations, thus creating individual strategies of action within an “objectively” determined habitus. This “socially constituted system of cognitive and motivating structures” (76) as habitus relates the subjective element to the socially structured external situation in which the agents’ interests are embedded. The external situation, perceived objectivity, is structured as customary or juridical rule that determines practice, but *only as a secondary principle* subordinated to the primacy of interest. It becomes thus clear that external restraints (as for example collective identification schemes) are inherently fluid and dynamic. Realising that these social schemes are subject to change motivated by interest

of an actor or a cluster of actors represents a crucial insight for a comprehensive approach to emerging conflict situations. Nevertheless, the scope of change for social schemes or external conditions is limited by the configuration of individual dispositions which are structured by the social schemes and through practice capable of restructuring these schemes to a certain degree. Bearing in mind the above, another definition of the habitus and its relation to practice shall be presented:

“The habitus, the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations, produces practices which tend to reproduce the regularities immanent in the objective conditions of the production of their generative principle, while adjusting to the demands inscribed as objective potentialities in the situation, as defined by the cognitive and motivating structures making up the habitus.” (Bourdieu 2000: 78)

The habitus is durably installed due to the conditions of the human mind, capable of generating “improvisations”, i.e. subjective responses to the changing circumstances of different situations, nevertheless regulated and thus limited in its scope by the internalised dispositions being a result of previous practice. A person who is being confronted with a situation will react to his or hers perception in accordance with the pool of acquired knowledge and experience and behave congruent with the social rules internalised as unquestionable implicitness. Also, the compliance of practice with the external regularities (i.e. the reproduction of social structures one might even be opposing) creates an optimal space for the realisation of specific interests. Subjective practice, conditioned by objective structures, can have an influence on changing these structures yet still be embedded in their regularities. Thus the habitus, an unconscious accumulation of forgotten history, is integrated into the social world just as a fish moves through the water. History in the form of previous experiences is actively present in the habitus (cf. Bourdieu 2008: 101 & 105) and fuels its engine as a structuring device (*modus operandi*) of an externality it can in turn perceive as objectivity. Precisely this “fuel” makes it possible for practice to operate *relatively* independent from the external determinisms of the immediate present. Objectivity, as the product of subjective practice and (self-)perception, is hence being created as a *fait accompli* (*opus operatum*) and a product of history with objective meaning. This is nothing else than sociality seemingly materialised as nature, creating the illusion for analysts to be something *a priori* existing, discoverable and describable. It is the background-commonality of structure in which the meaningful exchange of practice can take place, spoken with Bourdieu: “Communication of consciousness” presupposes the existence of a “community of ‘unconsciousness’ (i.e. of

linguistic and cultural competences)". (Bourdieu 2000: 80). In this field of shared unconsciousness agents can act consciously through translating their perception by means of the habitus as a matrix of appreciations, actions and understanding, that enables them to complete a range of "infinitely diversified tasks" (83). In other words, the habitus is the engine of human social existence, linking the internal reality and the subject of the human mind with the outer reality and the objects of the human mind - it is the collectively "embodied sociality" (cf. Bourdieu & Wacquant 2006: 161). Similarly to Plato's theory of forms exemplified in the well-known allegory of the cave Bourdieu's model implies a dual nature of social reality: The outer reality of the "things", the social fields embedding the agents, and the inner reality in the "minds", the reality of the habitus filtered by the lenses of perception. As soon as the habitus enters into a relation with the social world, of which it is the product, it moves as a fish in the water and the world around it seems natural (cf. *ibid.*). This relation between the habitus and the social world also constitutes the core of identity discourses and the practice of symbolic differentiation projected onto social collectivities, which in its pattern resembles and follows the mechanisms of nationalism and modern consumerism. Günther Schlee and Karin Werner interpret the dual process of internalisation and externalisation via the habitus as a mechanism that connects the individual with the exterior world - emerging identity positions of subjects correspond to respective "world-environments", in which the world becomes a representation and the representation becomes the world (cf. Schlee & Werner 1996: 26). This practice of constructing the world through identity discourses is diverse; depending on the position in the social field, the corresponding dispositions, and the context different patterns of universalisms and particularisms are being created.

The main challenge in understanding the idea of the habitus is to escape the intellectual constraints of the usual binary alternatives of determinism and freedom, conditioning and creativity, consciousness and unconsciousness or individual and society - all of which the habitus tries to transcend (cf. Bourdieu 2008: 103). To explain social action without resorting to the notion of irrationality, as is so often the case within the domain of conflict studies, only becomes possible if one manages to correlate the social conditions under which the habitus, who contributed to their creation, has been formed, and the social conditions present at the moment of its application. The beauty of Bourdieu's approach becomes clear at the point where it allows us to renounce the notion of "the unconscious" as well as analogous concepts (as primordial approaches to group affiliation), which turn out to be merely the "forgetting of history, created by history itself" (cf. Bourdieu 2008: 105). At this point, however, we should not forget that the structures of a social field, a persons position within this field and his internalised dispositions manifested in the habitus do not take effect on the persons actions

directly and mechanically, but as a secondary generative principle merely direct the decisive element of *interest* within a certain scope. An empirical example presented by Russell Hardin clearly illustrates this dynamic (cf. Hardin 1995a: 148 et seq. and 1995b: 35 et seq.). Analysing the interviews conducted with a young Croatian killer of Mostar involved in massacres during the Yugoslavian war, Hardin challenges the commonly postulated claim of collective ethnic motivation of perpetrators and breaks this misleading simplification of history down to the actor-based level of analysis. As many individuals committing brutal acts of violence, retrospectively attributed to the responsibility of whole groups based on a common, singular identity (as Croats, Serbs, Hutu, Tutsi, Muslims, Christians, Arabs, Africans, etc.), the young killer, perversely, “had either to leave his community altogether or he had to identify with it altogether” (1995a: 148 and 1995b: 35) due to the pressure of the conflicting movement’s leadership. Hardin continues: “The Croatian killer’s alternatives were grim and therefore his choice was grim. But he was not so different from the gentilhomme of centuries past in France who chose to risk committing murder in a duel rather than be banished from his community” (1995b: 36). In no way does this explanation excuse the committed acts of murder and violence, however, it enables us to understand the mechanisms leading to this crimes without judging and condemning them beforehand and thus obscuring the circumstances responsible for its occurrence and hence possible reoccurrence. A fish cannot live without water, nor is it possible for a social actor to exist beyond the projected context of his or hers social existence. The habitus, being a product of accumulated past, mirrors the structuring structures of its formation that define the tendency of a persons interests allocated in the field. It is true and of utmost significance that for “participants in such carnage, their own gruesome actions seem to lead to putative beliefs in the wrongs of the other group” (1995a: 149 and 1995b: 36), consequently grounding political claims of elites with a core interests in capitals at stake in myths that foster violence even when personal hatred and knowledge about the individual victims is lacking. However, just as institutional and juridical constraints, myths structuring the configuration of a given social constellation, subsequently internalised by involved agents as dispositions, only define the practice as a secondary principle subjected to interests being either in a relative position to various acquired or aspired forms of capital in the social field or (representing probably the basic and strongest form of interest) being in relation to the existence in the field itself. Interest in respect to the social field can be translated in the broadest sense as a social survival instinct - if I am threatened to lose everything that constitutes my social identity (and hence the subjectively imaginable framework of my existence), I comply with the dynamics that actually radically change this framework within the emerging conflict situation, but, nevertheless,

include me as a part and thus provide my continued existence. Myths, ideologies and political dogmas or convictions only legitimise violence *ex post facto*, they may facilitate its occurrence but cannot account as a root cause for its emergence. As Hardin illustrates on his case: “the Croatian killer of Mostar does not need Milosevic’s or Tudjman’s lies and mythologies to give him license. He openly confesses to having nothing other than interests at stake” (1995b: 36).

Yet one should bear in mind that interest is not just a self-contained rationality but has its defining foundations in the habitus through which it emerges as practice. The decision to kill instead of being killed results from the socialised, learned and internalised priority distribution. Speaking with Carter Bentley, rational interest-seeking behaviour is in fact “an acting out of objective constraints encoded in unexamined assumptions about what is reasonable and unreasonable” (Bentley 1987: 28), hence structured by the scopes and limits of the habitus. The limits are the implicit assumptions about which possible action is most reasonable, the scope provides the diversity of actually possible actions within the given limits. The habitus indicates the presence of choice and hence responsibility as a crucial element of action, yet it also makes us aware of the boundaries restraining the subjectively possible spectrum of choices. In the theory of practice interest becomes a primary factor of action that is situated beyond the banal dichotomy of free choice and total determinism. This conclusion shall be kept in mind for further consideration in chapter 5.2.3., where the role of interests in relation to central conflict actors and the structural conditions of emerging violent social conflicts will be examined more closely. The individual case of a perpetrator presented above gave us a snapshot of the larger social mechanisms at work beneath the apparent and beyond the perceived reality of violent conflicts.

But how can this insight be integrated into a comprehensive model, capable of explaining (1) the fact of existing “interethnic” tensions and mistrust, relatively absent in “intraethnic” relations, (2) the by far more common situation of peaceful and cooperative relations, despite the tensions, that only in rare instances lead to large-scale violence, and (3) *if, why, and how* inter-group tensions actually lead to or foster spirals of violence, while in other cases the tensions persist, but disputes do not escalate into war (cf. Fearon & Laitin 1996: 715). The above illustrated fact that narratives of blame and threat as well as other myths externalising social fears onto specific clusters of social agents do not stand in direct causal relation with instances of large-scale violence seems to be supported by the widespread presence of the former against the background of rare eruptions of the latter. Narratives and myths play a crucial function in emerging violent conflicts, as will be elaborated in chapter 5.2.4., but they are not a precondition for social violence to occur and escalate in the first place. Rather, we

must search for the elements generating a violent conflict in the relationship between the habitus and the social world: A conflict is a basic aspect of social development, often with a remarkable constructive potential. It remains this way as long as it is embedded in efficiently working mechanisms of the structural environment that guarantees all involved actors at least the possibility of implementing their justified interests without disregarding the needs of other actors. These mechanisms are usually provided by a functioning state apparatus that also contributes to the formation of a civic habitus through the investment of its accumulated and centralised capital. However, sociality is not naturally state-dependent. Evidence suggests that in all those spaces “where state authority is absent or weak (...) interethnic relations frequently remain cooperative”. Fearon and Laitin argue that “decentralized, nonstate institutional mechanisms may often arise to mitigate problems of opportunism in interactions between individuals from different ethnic groups”. These mechanisms “work to preserve interethnic peace” (Fearon & Laitin 1996: 715). Yet if the peace in these instances is “interethnic”, then ethnicity as a criteria of social differentiation within situations of diverging interests and hence non-escalating conflicts is meaningless, since the mentioned decentralised mechanisms operate on an issue-specific basis at an interpersonal level exactly in accordance with the rules of optimal mutual interest fulfilment. Peaceful cooperation on the sub-state level is marked by “highly developed systems of social networks that allow cheap and rapid transmission of information about individuals and their past histories” (718), which are most advanced within social collectivities subjected to a common form of identification such as ideology in its manifestation as religion or ethnicity. In small groups “everyone knows everything about everybody” (719). From this fact Fearon and Laitin deduce that peaceful outcomes are not related to shared meanings (i.e. the common framing and labelling of the perceived environment), but rather to shared information permitting trust- and reputation-building. Logically, tensions arise when the cost of obtaining information about individuals is higher, which happens to be the case either in more complex social collectivities that lack appropriate mechanisms of information sharing, participation and knowledge transmission, or across externally bounded and closed groups. The consequence of this reasoning can be illustrated on the simple fact of prejudicial ascriptions to members of other groups, who cannot be individually identified as being involved in a violent conflict: Completely independent from the personal attitude, knowledge and experience of, for instance, an average Croat, the notion of “Serb” will involve certain ascriptions associated with the narratives propagated in the course of recent history. These ascriptions may not at all be part of his or hers perception when confronted with a former soldier of the Yugoslav People’s Army or the Army of the Republic Srpska, yet the consciousness of the ascriptions will persist

due to the initial lack of information about the individual. In a conflict situation the function of the internalised narratives lies in their enabling potential as implicit legitimisation strategies. The dispersion of a habitus that tolerates violent acts of small paramilitary groups and other perpetrators due to either indoctrination or coercion also works like the water in which a fish can swim. So-called ethnic or religious violence is centred around the relation between the small minority of criminal perpetrators (cf. chapter 5.2.2.) and the vast bulk of passively tolerating majority rhetorically associated with the former under the umbrella of a unitary labelling mechanism applied by central actors in charge of the mobilisation (cf. Kenney 1996: 164).

In sum, what are the implications of this insight for our understanding of ethnicity? First of all, ethnicity and analogous concepts such as race or nation are inherently relational and processual terms rather than substantial entities or concepts completely interchangeable with the collectivity of their addressees. Rogers Brubaker encourages us to “rethink ethnicity” and depart from the “image of discrete, concrete, tangible, bounded, and enduring ‘groups’ (...). It means thinking of ethnicization, racialization, and nationalization as political, social, cultural, and psychological processes” (Brubaker 2004: 11). This is exactly the implication that naturally results from the logical conclusions of the theory of practice. To describe social reality means to *think* social reality. In contrast to the physical world³³ the social world does not derive its objectivity from a preexistent state outside the human mind but only as an appreciation of the *objectification* of dynamics, that are inherently functional aspects of human practice and perception. Thinking sociality with Bourdieu allows us to transcend the limits imposed by an unchallenged absorption of framing claims that, however imaginary constructed, are real and significant in their consequences, especially when embedded in institutional or other frameworks holding the necessary resources and capitals for implementing these claims. Analogous, as to the “reality of ethnicity” Brubaker observes that social categorisations of this kind are consequential, yet this “reality of race (...) does not

³³ The still dominant paradigms of modern physics stand in opposition to the philosophical radical constructivism, postulating that the outside world, embedded in the three perceivable spacial dimensions and linear time, has an objective structural nature independent of the existence of consciousness. Yet there is an increasing amount of scientists cautiously questioning this perspective due to the cumulative data resulting from new experiments and the respective mathematical consequences. It gradually seems to become clear that on a quantum level even the physical world is all but stable and objectively given. Phenomena as electrons continuously popping into and dropping out of their existence only discernible as a probability cloud depending on their quantum state or energy level, their entanglement based on the respective spin factor being totally independent of spacial distance and time, the manifestation of particles as a collapse of the wave function and a consequence of its mere perception (measurement) - all point to the fact the cognition of reality by the human mind heavily depends on the projection of concepts emerging in the human mind itself as a space embedding the sensory stimuli in the broadest sense.

depend on the existence of ‘races’” (Brubaker 2004: 11). Bearing in mind the outlined nature of the objective social order as objectified subjectivity and its relation to human practice as resulting from internalised dispositions translated through the systems of the habitus, i.e. understanding the movements of the “fish in the water”, we can now make an attempt to unveil the covert logic of what is perceived as “irrational” action from an observer’s perspective of violent conflicts that do not escape the boundaries of its own fishbowl.

5.1.3. Dispositions and the objective order: Understanding the “irrational”

At the core of a comprehensive understanding of human practice that overcomes the illusion of conscious and deliberate choice on the one hand (manifested as free will or mutual election in interpersonal relationships) and predestination on the other hand (in the form of unchangeable, inborn identity with the diachronic element of history and destiny as well as the synchronic ideology of shared groupness or decisive commonality) lies the “dialectical relationship between the objective structures and the cognitive and motivating structures which they produce and which tend to reproduce them” (Bourdieu 2000: 83). This is the relationship between the social field and the habitus, between the environmental conditions objectified by the subjective schemes of perception and these generative concepts of cognition historically internalised from the environmental conditions. Similarly to this structural relationship there is a dichotomy of potentialities that essentially affect the investment of various forms of capital: the relation between individual dispositions and social positions. I call these parameters of the model ‘potentialities’, for they are context-specific values co-dependent on each other and embedded in the basic structures elaborated so far. The dispositions of an individual form the potential scope of his or her action and reflect the specific position in the social field one occupies. They mark and mirror the social positions (cf. *ibid.*: 82) and are the individual manifestation of a collective habitus which itself is a subjective, but not particular (i.e. not person-bound) system of cognition, understanding and framing being in direct relation to the social space it emerges from and forms respectively.³⁴ While the habitus, according to Bourdieu, is a class-specific scheme, the individual systems of dispositions (more or less synonymous with a person’s ‘character’) are structural variations of similar systems within the class-specific context, reflecting the particular position within this class (cf. Bourdieu 2008: 113). Reading Bourdieu against the background of the relativity and

³⁴ For an illustration of the social model as initially elaborated by Pierre Bourdieu cf. chart 5 in chapter 5.1.4.

fluidity of primordial group concepts, however, clearly unveils a certain element of his own scientific habitus: the very dominant marxist socialisation. His application of the class-concept is very homogenous throughout his work and at certain points arises the suspicion of being yet another essentialistic group-concept merely substituting others. While I, as an individual person, agree on being myself a “structural variation” (in terms of the configuration of my system of dispositions, my ‘character’ so to speak) of other individuals who experienced a similar socialisation, I refuse to consider my socialisation as homogenous, constant or class-specific. My dispositions are embedded in a specific habitus, yet the high degree of intellectual and physical mobility provided by the technological and social flows of globalisation transcends many boundaries of closed social spaces such as the concept of a social class. It hence shows that the term “class” as a categorisation of a social field that produces a certain habitus is inappropriate under certain conditions and has to be substituted by a more dynamic understanding: the social field is at best an approximation to a commonly perceived lifestyle of “class” in the broadest sense, its totality (although perceived as objectively given) is only conceivable from the subjective position of the individual. Being a member of the working class, an intellectual, an African-American, a Sudanese Muslim, a citizen of Bosnia and Herzegovina, an artist or a lesbian are all identifications that demarcate a specific concept of a social class or affiliation, yet it is never a singular social space that produces a correlating habitus within which individuals display structural variations of a shared system of dispositions. The meaning and content of the objectively given social spaces of socialisation and affiliation and hence their actual conceptualisation are always subjectively determined. The complexity of the dialectical relationship between dispositions and social positions and their integration in the framework of objectified (social field) and internalised (habitus) structures has often been oversimplified by Bourdieu himself. Consider the following: The social position of an African-American worker may be very different from the one held by a European immigrant or light skinned nationalist; the position of a Christian Dinka living in Khartoum may not have the same perspectives as that of his neighbour emigrated from Bosnia and educated as a mufti in Riyadh. We do not have to construct further hypothetical cases to illustrate that “class”, social affiliation, field or environment are essentially relational terms and not *per se* tied to the social positions or dispositions mirroring the former.

However, what remains true is that the subjectively conceivable topology of the social space that is *approximately* the dominant space for a given number of people (conceptualised as a centre-periphery model with a normal distribution of concerned individuals) can thus, only in relative approximation and not absolutely applicable, be described as a field (cf. Bourdieu

1998: 49) with a dual quality: a field as a space, in which the agents act *and* as a force field (structuring structure) affecting the agents and shaped by the agents. This field or external structures are “objectivities irreducible to their manifestation in the habitus which they produce and which tend to reproduce them” (Bourdieu 2000: 84). However, in a functional sense this declarative statement does not have much significance, for no matter how intrinsically objective these objectivities may be, their perception is only possible through the subjectivity of the habitus. The cognition as an act of relating oneself to something else is itself an act of practice structuring the structure. Reality as the “objective order” is *potentially* (according to probabilities) always everything and nothing, it *is* objectively existent (as a field enabling subjective manifestation) but *not* an existing object. On the level of the social world the construction of the objective order relies on the superimposition of “cognitive constructions” on more or less objective but *qualitatively* irrelevant markers of difference between collectivities of people. These cognitive constructions, “because they are cultural in nature, need to be seen as matters of consciousness. As a consequence, access to and understanding of them by outsiders may be profoundly problematic” (Cohen 2000: 2). This conclusion would lead to cultural relativism if we continued to be concerned with the content of those constructions of consciousness as a relevant aspect of human interaction. To a certain extent, of course, a shared cognitive construction of the world is as a prerequisite for efficient communication and interaction. However, the mere recognition and appreciation of all reality as being *in consequence* essentially subjective and in flux is itself a quantum leap for the understanding of sociality and opens up possibilities for the manipulation and transformation of violent social conflicts conceived as incompatibilities of interests framed by collective labels. Paraphrasing Bourdieu one can state in respect to social life that, yes indeed, there is a reality of things out there, but it only comes into existence as perception through the habitus which is qualitatively independent of the reality of things itself but in fact a product of the superimposed concepts of perception created by the dynamics of internalisation and externalisation and limited by the capabilities of human mind and its use of the sensory organs in everyday life. Talking about the human mind in a social sense, however, should not lead us to lapse into the neo-Kantian understanding of subjectivity as independent consciousness sovereignly operating and constructing the “world of objects”. Again, Bourdieu reminds us of the mutually reinforcing relationship, highlighting that:

“[T]he mental structures which construct the world of objects are constructed in the practice of a world of objects constructed according to the same structures. The mind born of the world of objects does not rise as a subjectivity confronting an objectivity: the

objective universe is made up of objects which are the product of objectifying operations structured according to the very structures which the mind applies to it. The mind is a metaphor of the world of objects which is itself but an endless circle of mutually reflecting metaphors” (Bourdieu 2000: 91).

In other words, social agents actively condition the situation, which conditions them. One could say that they are externally determined only insofar as they determine themselves. The categories of perception and evaluation which are hence the source of this (self-) determination, however, are limited and formed mainly by the economic and social conditions of their development (cf. Bourdieu & Wacquant 2006: 170), so the element of time comes into play and further limits the possibilities of actual self-determination as yet another structural condition. The objective structures become an experience of reality exhibiting, or rather concealing, crucial qualities relevant for the successful implementation of interests in accordance with specific power relations constituting the stability and matrix of self-reproduction of the recognised objective structures, which we shall henceforth refer to as *doxa* (cf. Bourdieu 2000: 164). But what exactly is meant by *doxa* and how is it related to the understanding of social conflicts?

Much has already been said about the mutually reinforcing and generative relationship between the internalised and the objective structures, the game of the habitus and the field or the “movement of the fish in the water”. Objective structures, that is the established social order, logically have to imply implicit and explicit rules and limits of action, for the collective appreciation of these rules and limits is the precondition of their continued existence. The mechanism that accounts for the reproduction of a social order is based on the correspondence between the objective classes and the internalised ones: The logic of the mutually reinforcing reproduction of internal and external systems of classification create the “sense of limits, commonly called the sense of reality” (164) which define the framework of an agent’s self-fulfilment within a social field. The implicit acting in accordance with the objective classes as a premise, in fact often as the only possible way for an actor’s interest implementation, contributes to the reproduction of the concealed power relations on which the established order is based, but also creates a sense of the social world that hence appears as natural and self-evident. The experience of this “quasi-perfect correspondence between the objective order and the subjective principles of organization” Bourdieu calls *doxa* “so as to distinguish it from an orthodox or heterodox belief implying awareness and recognition of the possibility of different or antagonistic beliefs” (*ibid.*). Subsequently it becomes clear that the

ratio of dispositions reflecting the external structures is proportionally related to the stability of a social order, i.e. of doxa or “that which is taken for granted” (166). The stability of the field of doxa hence depends on its recognition as being natural, rightful and self-evident and the corresponding ‘misrecognition’ of its arbitrariness as being just one possible order among various. The shared recognition of the conditions of existence (the external structures, the social field or its respective framing) confirm the dispositions of the individuals sharing the common recognition (hence distinguishing them as “members of a group” or social category) through their own practice as well as through institutionalised discourses about the recognised social world. The validation and affirmation of the objective order is congruent with the process of legitimisation of practice by means of invoking the appropriate framing that has to be recognised for the legitimisation to be effective. The existence and stability of doxa essentially requires an *absence of opinion* capable of questioning that which is supposed to be self-evident. Simultaneously, the mere cognition of doxa as a paradigmatic, hegemonic ideology or established social order based on eventually arbitrary markers requires the *emergence of opinion* as a field capable of challenging the doxa. Just as the perception of light is only possible through the experience of darkness, so can the truth of doxa only be revealed by a negative confrontation of challenging interpretations and framings of the social world: This is the point at which political and economic crises become manifest and align themselves with particular classes of individuals sharing certain dispositions which are directly linked to the respective interests and forms of capitals at stake in the concerned social field. Implicit and explicit recognition of doxa calls for a social space that enables interests to be implemented and provides opportunities of self-fulfilment through appropriate capital investments within the undisputed social framework. Conflict arises only when the balance in this “universe of the undiscussed” (cf. chart 4) becomes disrupted through structural changes in the economic or political sphere. Consequently the accompanying change of social positions affects the dispositions linked to specific clusters of capital situated in the social field. Agents adapt their practice correspondingly to the matrix of the habitus and the primary motivation of interest in respect to the forms of capital at stake. Alongside this process the field of *opinion* emerges and contributes to the formation of new framings for social constellations - depending on the specific configuration of the crisis the perception of an “ethnic group conflict” arises and manifests itself as such.

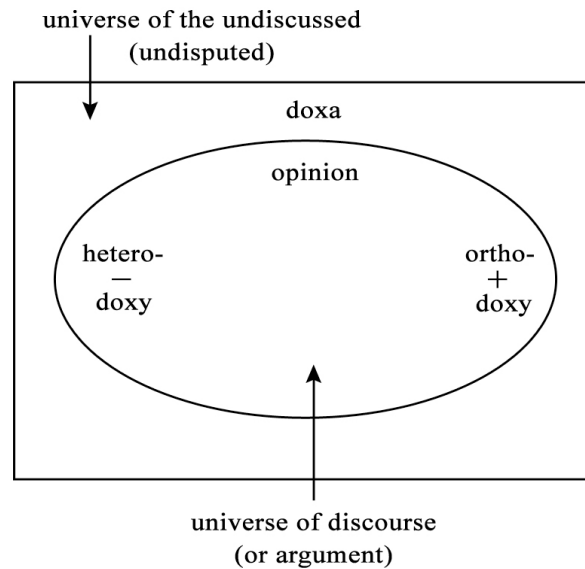


Chart 4: The universe of discourse emerging in the field of doxa (Bourdieu 2000: 168).

As soon as opinion and with it the field of discourse arises in a social space, doxa itself becomes transformed into orthodoxy, an opinion that cannot be self-evident anymore since it has been challenged, qualified and hence taken out of its absolute and undisputed position into a relative opposition to the emerged heterodoxy. Orthodoxy, aiming at “restoring the primal state of innocence of doxa” and without ever entirely succeeding at this enterprise (cf. 169 et seq.), requires the continuous work of systematisation and explicit rationalisation, also engaging in a framing and legitimisation process that has not been necessary before. Since orthodoxy, however, still remains the dominant opinion within a given social space it is engaged in an endeavour of censorship, now clearly exhibiting the power relations formerly concealed by the doxical recognition of the world, i.e. the concordance between the objective and the cognitive structures. An authentic theory of dominance and politics has hence to be based on the analysis of the implicit acceptance within the realm of doxa (cf. Bourdieu & Wacquant 2006: 205).

Various scientific approaches have tried to deal with the question of the relative stability of social categories and knowledge often observed within particular communities, considering the fundamentally dynamic modes of human cognition as presented above. Fredrik Barth goes about explaining the “degree of cognitive stability in a population (...) generated in several ways” (Barth 2000: 27): (1) there is no known alternative - this is ideally the situation of pure self-evident doxa without any challenging discourses, (2) obvious alternatives are present, however, “there is systematic indoctrination whereby authoritative teachings are drummed in and elevated to dogma” - a situation that reflects the mechanisms upholding orthodoxy

against the field of heterodoxy, and (3) stability of objective cognitive structures is provided in situations “where tasks are distributed in a group and smooth social cooperation is vital to their performance” favouring shared conventions to enable an unambiguous and swift communicability. The latter case represents a mechanism that dominates the (international) scientific field and its knowledge transfer. Whereas the first form of stability is simply unchallenged and the second heavily based on a monopoly of power and definition capacity, the decisive element of the third form is efficiency as a constitutive aspect of the shared perception and organisation. The three forms of stability presented by Barth are in fact applicable on random forms of collective identifications, including such phenomena as ethnicity or nationality. A vast bulk of scientific contributions stalls at the questions of the nature of ethnicity (as being either primordial or constructed), which we fortunately already managed to overcome in chapter 4, and the rightness of ethnicity as a morally acceptable concept (confronting it with similar constructions such as ‘race’ with all its dubious connotations). Ethnicity and its seemingly rising predominance in the last decades can be understood as a form of perception and organisation of differences in the context of processes of globalisation. Its success is to be attributed to its functionally efficient form of both a sense-making resource (cf. Schlee & Werner 1996: 20 et seq.) as a means of establishing doxa and at the same time creating a field of potentiality within which the central actors can implement their dispositions into aspired social positions according to their interest in specific forms of capital. Recognising the functional rationality of ethnicity (as well analogous concepts) does not mean to morally approve, disapprove or judge it in any way, but to unveil the subjective logic and motivating processes that may seem irrational at first glance. What an external observer might perceive as primordial loyalty to a group, supporting paramilitary organisations and political acts of violence, that apparently contradicts the “real” or “rational” interests of the group as perceived by the observer (cf. Kenney 1996: 163), is in fact a mechanism governed by the very logic of an extended understanding of social economy that recognises the importance of symbolic capital and the respective concealment of interests as presented above and in the previous chapters. Ethnic categories and ethnic belonging are neither objectively determined and unchangeable nor are they *pre se* problematic as a phenomenon of social order. They are not mutually exclusive and usually only of very little significance for daily life in a social field of undisputed doxa. Evidence suggests that ethnicity only becomes activated as a form of segregation and strife as soon as its instrumentalisation as a means of segregation marks a circumstantially meaningful efficiency. Such activating circumstances often present themselves as political or economic interests of certain actors and clusters of actors with a specific interest related to power, which can crystallise

themselves depending on the current social circumstances in very different ways. Just as the circumstances are flexible and changing, so is the relevance of ethnic categories and their respective social markers. This dependency clearly shows the rationality of practice framed in ethnic terms - "although one's ethnicity is not primordially determined, the social construction of ethnicity as a reflexive and rational process makes it become real" (Kuntzsch 2007: 17). This dynamic unveils the topology of ethnicity as a social field with a dual quality, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter: on the one hand its significance as *condition*, i.e. the embedding space of social practice, and on the other hand the *processual* dimension, being in sharp contrast to its common and uncritical perception and use as static "identity" in a structural, rather than functional sense. Once conceptualised as such, ethnicity manifest itself both in the applied patterns of practice as well as the corresponding sensations of ethnic affinity (cf. Bentley 1987: 29 et seqq.). The latter, according to the "practice theory of ethnicity" deduced by Carter Bentley from Bourdieu's sociological toolkit, "are founded on common life experiences that generate similar habitual dispositions" (*ibid.*: 32). The structures of a shared habitus and the corresponding commonality of experience that structured the former are the basis for a sense of social affiliation that enables members of a given society to interact with a higher degree of empathy unavailable in relationships to more distant individuals at the periphery of the social field or beyond. This empathy is not an inborn, genetically shared feature of "common blood", but a mechanism constructed through social interaction enabling individual actors to estimate the probability of mutual expectations more precisely and hence reduce the potential uncertainty within the social field. The mechanism of empathic uncertainty reduction works complementary to the structural conditions of institutionalised information sharing already referred to several times. In both cases, the inversion of this mechanisms corresponds to the process of social differentiation and segregation: The emergence of social conflicts and their development is *inversely proportional* to the degree of social uncertainty - whereas uncertainty reduction goes along with an increase of social coherence, dynamics of social fission and emerging conflicts imply a rise of uncertainty within the social field, in turn fostering mechanisms of re-establishing spaces of inner security within the closest radius of social agents linked to a contested resource or form of capital. Naturally, this re-establishing (or re-definition in terms of mobilisation and legitimisation) is based on both complementary mechanisms: the construction of structural conditions assuring inner security and hence outer delimitation (creation of institutional means of internal communication and action, ranging from clubs, own juridical systems to paramilitary organisations and armed forces) on the one hand, and the invocation of empathic affinities based on structural variations of the same systems of

dispositions grounded in shared aspects of a habitus on the other hand. Ethnic, national, tribal or as a matter of fact any kind of shared social affinities emerge thus as a consequence rather than as a cause of social and symbolic oppositions (cf. *ibid.*: 35).

If increased social coherence and certainty in regard to the probability of fulfilled expectations correspond to a shared empathy within, then social division and the respective practice goes hand in hand with the reciprocal emotional condition: fear projected outwards. At this point many scientific analysts fail to grasp the logic of violent social conflicts, for they implicitly associate fear as an emotion with irrationality as opposed to causally logical and non-emotional behaviour. Yet emotions, being decisive elements of social, political and even economic³⁵ processes, have their own subjective rationality only fully comprehensible in the framework of a extensive symbolic economy of internal dispositions and external social order as outlined by Pierre Bourdieu. In their correspondence “Hate Narratives and Ethnic Conflict” Arman Grigorian rightly criticises the narrow perspective on irrationality and cultural determinism as argued by Stuart J. Kaufman, asserting that such an approach “has essentially dressed up in academic garb an old, but mistaken, belief about the fundamental irrationality and cultural roots of these conflicts” (Grigorian 2007: 186). Appreciating the subjective rationality of emotions without even engaging in a moral discussion about their validity significantly rises the complexity of processes such as emerging violent social conflicts, however, it permits totally new possibilities of action that simplistic approaches based on the irrationality of behaviour cannot provide. The three most important scientific traditions dealing with violent conflicts; international relations, game theory, and rational choice; all consider ethnic violence to be “a product of rational action (rather than emotion or irrationality), though structural background conditions are seen as crucially shaping the contexts of choice” (Brubaker & Laitin 1998: 437). Emotions, however, cannot be simply discounted and equated with irrationality, for they are too subjected to a contextual logic resulting from the dynamics outline above. To account for the role of emotions, however, does not mean to make the mistake of using them as a causal explanation for ethnically motivated behaviour. Rather, emotions as a significant element of social processes should be understood

³⁵ The mere existence of the international stock exchanges and their dynamics of trading fundamentally rely on trend prognoses that are subjected to social expectations of developments, which by their own force crucially shape those developments. Neither Keynesian nor neo-liberal macroeconomic theories fully account for the role of opinion as a calculable element of economic development. As the recent global financial crisis and follow-up breakdowns of markets and economic entities as in Iceland in 2009 and in the first quarter of 2010 in Greece illustrate, economic developments rely on the structural mechanisms operating on the market as well as on their perception and interpretation, especially by influential individuals and institutions operating on the equity market.

in their own logic, which is being reflected in social practice according to given interests. Interests and their subjective perception, however, crucially depend on the existing limits of knowledge (cf. Hardin 1995b: 15), both in respect to the subjective rationality of a particular agent's actions as well as the understanding of his or hers interests through an external observer and the available data capable of assessing the rationality of actions. As was elaborated above, channels of social communication and interaction having the potential of creating a common field of understanding, such as language, religion, local communities, customs and shared traditions, etc. - all "affect individuals' costs of transaction with one another and stabilize expectations" (25) and hence reduce social uncertainty, subsequently creating spaces for identification in cases where social actors are forced to rely on this channels in an intensified manner due to social imbalances and crises. In accordance with the described definition of a broader social economic system including symbolic capital as a convertible resource, these channels or influences can indeed be characterised as *economic* and provide a more comprehensive perspective on the covert rationality of human action. Bearing in mind the facts presented in chapter 5.1.1. relating the social coherence of a group to the focal concentration of symbolic capital, one can logically conclude that a group gains stability and power from successful coordination of its members. Ideally, successful coordination implies the creation of a secure internal social environment, efficient information flow and capacities, which all have to be directed by specific sets of recognised norms. In such an environment the potential access to desired positions is most probable, and since we already know that practice relating the internalised dispositions to the aspired positions is primarily governed by interest, it follows that "individual identification with such groups as ethnic groups is not primordial" (41) but essentially rational. To "identify" with specific markers of a group label does not mean to completely absorb the "identity", i.e. the rhetoric claims of that group, but rather to align oneself with the opportunities provided by that social field in order to implement the predominant interests in a most effective way. In an emerging social conflict a random individual tolerates or even supports the developments directed by the centre of a group or the central "node" of a cluster of people pooled according to their interest in arbitrary forms of capital, not because he or she feels an eternal belonging and attachment to the fellow group members sharing the same blood, colour of skin, language,

belief, worldview, the same ancient hatreds, fears or ideological convictions,³⁶ but for the simple reason that his or hers social opportunities and hence the implementation of his or hers interests depend on the integration within a given system. If my alternatives are to lose my job, my investments, my accumulated social capital, any prospects for my future career, all my material belongings, my family and possibly my own life; or subscribe to a party's membership, to conform with the decisions made by the current leaders of the social community I am integrated into, to participate in rallies and manifestations, to join campaigns and paramilitary organisations and to engage in violence and murder, then I am indeed confronted with grim alternatives and in many cases the choices, depending on my habitus, knowledge, and the expectations and perspectives on the consequences of my actions, will be grim too. On the condition that a human being has unimpeded mental capabilities, is able to critically reflect on his perception and is not subjected to external threats, any action is "*fully rational given the available knowledge*. A rational choice explanation of behavior must often therefore take individual-specific knowledge into account" (Hardin 1995a: 16). This is the logic of the subject that applies the available knowledge and internalised filters of the habitus when calculating or choosing, yet this knowledge is limited by past experience and structural constraints. Consider the following in order to understand the subjective rationality of the relational truth of reality: "It would be perfectly moral for the Serbs to rule over all of Yugoslavia - if there were no Croats, Muslims, or others to contest their dominance" (17).

Understanding the factors outlined in this chapter permits us to abandon analytical blind allies defined by a perception of "irrationality" for good and gives us, in combination with the comprehensive approach to be elaborated in the course of this paper, the keys to unveil the dynamics of violent social conflicts and hence new possibilities of engagement in international conflict management.

³⁶ Ideological conviction, however, can be a motivation for action that goes against the fundamental interest of a human being, i.e. the will to survive, and hence a factor enabling that individual to engage in fatal violence. Along with mental disorder or desensitisation and external (death) threat, however, in chapter 2 we defined ideological conviction as one of the three conditions under which a human being is willing to sacrifice his own life and/or to kill. For an individual subjected to ideological indoctrination and incapable of critical reflection his action will nevertheless be guided by his own subjective rationality. In most cases of social violence, however, the rationality of violence is much more banal and ordinary.

5.1.4. Holding the keys: a toolkit to unveil the dynamics of conflicts

A general understanding of social practice beneath the apparent categorisation of social dynamics according to collective labels that conceal essential power relations and beyond the perceived reality of seemingly irrational actions and incomprehensible affects and affinities is also a key to a clearer comprehension of violent social conflict dynamics. The analytical toolkit available in the theory of practice, as presented in the chapters above, provides a meaningful and coherent model capable of explaining in depth processes and dynamics disregarded by common approaches to conflict analysis. Constructing the foundations of modern frame analysis, Erving Goffman realised 35 years ago that the perceived meaning of everyday action is “dependent on a closed, finite set of rules”, whose explication would give one a “powerful means of analyzing social life” (Goffman 1975: 5). According to Goffman, actors involved in a certain situation act accordingly to their perception of the given situation and to their underlying frameworks of understanding available in the embedding society. These frameworks or frames of reference are socially constructed anchors providing meaning and making sense out of events. They are subjected to “special vulnerabilities” (10) or access points available for individuals capable of forming the dynamic structure of those frames. Goffman defined “frames” as principles of organisation (or principles of experience) which govern social events and the subjective involvement of actors in them. Definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with these principles (cf. *ibid.*). Although this conceptual approach is yet quite undifferentiated and not very comprehensively conceived, it gives us a sense of the understanding of social practice being situated in between the poles of the subjective (internalised) and the objective (externalised or objectified), as fully grasped only by the theoretical toolkit of Pierre Bourdieu, featuring the elements of habitus, dispositions and positions in the social field, practice, interest and various forms of capital. In contrast to instrumentalist and primordialist models and their numerous variations the theory of practice accounts for the affective dimension of ethnic affiliation and its contextual dependence. Relying on the concept of the habitus, “the theory explains the objective grounding for perceptions and feelings of ethnic affinity and difference and also accounts for the clear but irregular association between social structure and ethnic consciousness. This suggests that, instead of focusing directly on the relation between objective context and subjective consciousness of identity, as have virtually all extant models, we ought to attend to how each of these is related to habitus, the intervening variable” (Bentley 1987: 40).

Conceptions of ethnic and other identity, being symbolically constructed schemes of shared descent, destiny or other kind of allegedly determining commonality, overlaid as socially significant 'meaning' onto perceivable markers of difference, are neither naturally given and unchangeable nor entirely arbitrary. In a conflict, group consciousness or a shared sentiment are not final explanations for the existence of collective affiliation and the resulting practice, but rather variables accompanying the emergence of groupness as a strategic process and itself in need of explanation. Comprehending ethnicity similarly to the habitus as a functional layer in the observable dynamics allows us to focus on the practice of its reproduction through various actors, involving strategic aspects of mobilisation and legitimisation (cf. *inter alia* Schlee & Werner 1996: 19). Ethnicity is thus neither a "catch-all-concept" in its essentialistic interpretation nor a voluntaristic instrument of manipulation, but a context-specific scheme of perception and sense-making dependent on the social configuration arising in the field of doxa (or orthodoxy vs. heterodoxy respectively), such as differences of class, gender, or other kinds of corresponding social positions. Distinguishing characteristics of ethnic differences, if comparatively confronted, can be highly variable, depending on the specific context. Due to cultural, religious, linguistic and customary sameness within the population, ethnic difference and the according murders in Rwanda have been constructed and carried out accordingly to the simple fact of which of the three possible names of *ubwoko* (Kinyarwanda for "ethnicity") has not been struck through on an individual's ID card³⁷ (cf. image A). In the conflict between Northern and Southern Sudan, the predominance of Islam in the North facilitated religion to be a convenient cleavage and marker of differentiation. Since this religious demarcation is not so easily available in the case of Darfur, another, nevertheless problematic, frame of affiliation as been applied by the elites in Khartoum in order to effectively deploy the mechanisms of social inclusion and exclusion: the self-perception of Arabs based on imaginary genealogies and the corresponding projection of (non-Arab) African identities onto the enemy (cf. Mukhtar: 2004). One could illustrate the argument on any number of cases - what remains important, however, is the insight that ethnicity as a functional frame of identification is subject to the very processes forming the habitus as a subjective and individually acquirable

³⁷ "The ethnicity item on the ID card first appeared on ID cards issued by Belgian colonial authorities after 1933. The entry for ethnicity on ID cards was retained after Independence in 1962." Prior to the Belgian classification system imposed after 1926, "Hutu and Tutsi could better have best been described as social caste groups and not separate ethnic groups. Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda share a common language and religious affiliations. Physical differences sometimes exist, but not always. Intermarriage between the groups has always occurred with some frequency. (...) Nearly three years before April 1994, in July 1991, NGOs strongly urged removal of ethnicity from official ID cards. Article 16 of the August 1993 Arusha Accords also required this action by the projected transitional government. ID cards were used to identify Tutsi victims for death during the 1994 genocide" (Prevent Genocide International, <http://www.preventgenocide.org/edu/pastgenocides/rwanda/indangamuntu.htm> | 28.05.2010 - also source of image A).

filter of perception and practice. Ethnicity as a scheme embedded in the habitus conditions the individual identification (the subjective acquisition of identities, i.e frames or labels functionally efficient for specific interest implementations and their transformation into dispositions) on the one hand, and the structural objectification of social difference as perceivable external reality on the other hand (cf. Schlee & Werner 1996: 20). The function of ethnicity is being activated through its linking of strategic goals and respective rhetorics of central actors and the penetration of the self-evident reality of the surrounding social actors relevant for the political projects to succeed. "Ethnicity is embodied and expressed not only in political projects and nationalist rhetoric but in everyday encounters, practical categories, commonsense knowledge, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, interactional cues, discursive frames, organizational routines, social networks, and institutional forms" (Brubaker 2004: 2). Only when this correspondence is present (in the sense of doxa), can ethnicity function as an efficient means of legitimisation and mobilisation, hence disguising the conflict of interests between concerned capital cluster nodes as a collective group conflict.

Mod: 3



Amazina y'abana n'igihe bavukiye
Noms, prénoms et date de naissance des enfants

Amazina Noms et Prénoms	Yavutse kuwa Né le/à	Igisina Sexe
1. Umwukama	27/8/79 B	
2. Umwukama	13/8/82 F	
3. Umwukama	16/4/88 F	
4. Umwukama	15/4/92 B	
5. ....	.....	.....
6. ....	.....	.....
7. ....	.....	.....
8. ....	.....	.....
9. ....	.....	.....
10. ....	.....	.....
11. ....	.....	.....
12. ....	.....	.....

Ubwoko (Mutu, Tutsi, Twa, Naturalisé)
Ethnie

Aho yavukiye ... Gushamara
Lieu de Naissance

Itariki yavutseho ... 1954
Date de Naissance

Umwuga ... Msi
Profession

Aho atuye ... Bwukera
Lieu de domicile

Amazina y'uwo bashakanye
Noms du Conjoint

N° C.I. ... 5104 M. A. A. H. S. A.

Umukono cyangwa igikumwe cya nyirayo
Signature ou Empreinte du titulaire

Image A: Rwandan National ID Card that cost a woman her life during the genocide in 1994.

A further conclusion from what has been elaborated so far is the fact that social difference (d) is reciprocally proportional to the degree of social communication (c), manifested through the

integration of the broader population into the democratic process, the existence of efficient mechanisms of information sharing and transparency, including a focus on critical education.

$$d = 1/c$$

These elements, which I subsumed under the term “social communication” serve the purpose of social uncertainty reduction as a basic mechanisms for the provision of social coherence (cf. chapter 5.1.3.). Uncertainty reduction is a “fundamental human motivation driving the nearly universal tendency for humans to divide themselves into groups” (Hale 2004: 464). This is true, however, only in cases where social communication is lacking to a certain degree. The more inclusive the communication and participation, the less important, necessary and relevant the tendency of social categorisation and division. Uncertainty reduction is a mechanism directly linked to the question of predictability (probability) of individual expectations in a social context, in other words: the presence or absence of social trust.³⁸ The possibility of successful communication, or interaction, declines with the size of a social collectivity. As Fearon and Laitin have rightly observed, “the greater the number of people with whom one interacts, the lower is the frequency of interaction with each individual on average” (Fearon & Laitin 1996: 718). Rising complexity within a society linked to the necessity of managing larger populations undermines the “two-party reputation mechanism” that governs interaction and conflict resolution in many decentralised face-to-face communities. Ultimately the declining frequency of social interaction and communication represents an informational problem arising in the context of complex industrial societies. A simple and effective way of reducing uncertainty, social complexity and information deficit as well as raising (limited) social coherence is social fission: “Ethnic groups can provide a partial solution to this problem for their own members”, having the ability to “condition cooperative behavior in their partners’ past behavior or history. That is, it must be possible to identify people who have cheated or exploited in the past” (*ibid.*).

Bearing in mind the example of social differentiation in Rwanda, based on nothing more than a thin line drawn with a pen in a person’s ID card, the question arises if there is a minimal set of conditions generating group-oriented behaviour. A research programme known as “social identity theory” (SIT), pioneered by Henri Tajfel (1982) and his associates, sought to pinpoint

³⁸ The role of uncertainty reduction through social communication as a means of rising social trust both in the context of a normative approach in social science as well as a method of conflict transformation will be discussed more closely in chapter 6.

the source of human grouping tendencies to the “commonality of fate”, implying in its results that “telling people that they belonged to a particular group was enough to produce group-oriented behavior” (Hale 2004: 465). The key motive “driving pervasive group formation and categorical thinking is posited to be uncertainty reduction” (466). The experiment clearly shows that social categorisation is totally independent of the existence of actual differences, but rather subject to the *information* provided about the social configuration enabling actors to act within a framework of perception that reduces the uncertainty and raises the predictability of the outcomes of their actions. Hence, monopolised information (and the ability to *create* and *distribute* information according to the interests of the central actors capable of doing so) tends to foster social categorisation while shared and horizontally distributed information (e.g. in the form of a broad and inclusive educational system) limits the probability of social differentiation. Identity as a manifested label of differentiation is, as the experiment shows, inherently situational and dynamic. Differentiation or categorisation thus refers to the socially shared perception of membership to a certain category, which, once crystallised, adds a certain sense of continuity to existence. For social mobilisation to take place, this shared perception is a basic element that has to be generated and reproduced in the concerned individuals’ habitus and hence represents a powerful instrument for central actors with a specific interest in available forms of capital in the social field. Collective mobilisation remains ineffective, as long as there is no minimum of correspondence between the mobilising ones and the dispositions of those, who can identify in the practice and rhetorics of the former (cf. Bourdieu 2008: 111). So collective identifications can take place because the identities (constructed labels of affiliation) instrumentalised by the mobilising agents are being reproduced in the habitus of the concerned. Depending on the desired mobilisation a central actor utilises those labels, which include and exclude the respective bulk of people according to the postulated criteria (cf. *inter alia* the mentioned case of Sudan). The utilisation of labels as well as the willingness of their reception, however, are subject to structures *structured by* the habitus in the course of its history, which through its generative quality of *structuring* the habitus have transformed into embodied dispositions. This is basically the whole nature of ethnicity or any kind of affiliations: not an arbitrary construction out of nothing (as some constructivists tend to postulate), nor an essentialistic and real unchangeability, but a product of the dialectic of *modus operandi* and *opus operatum* (cf. chapter 5.1.1.). To further clarify the essence of Bourdieu’s theory of practice as a basic toolkit to approach violent social conflicts let us consider the following illustration:

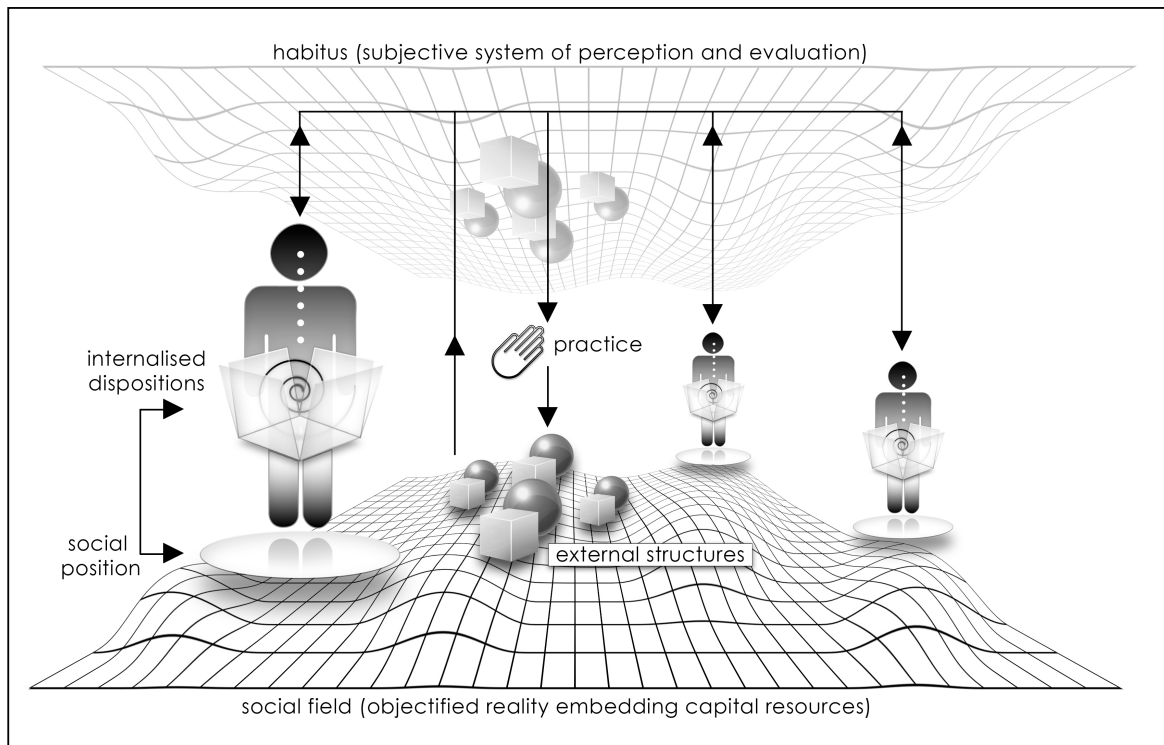


Chart 5: The theory of practice illustrated and simplified.

Recalling the previous chapters, the following can be concluded in a nutshell: Every individual human being entangled with other individuals and the external structures of social reality through his or her interaction and practice occupies a certain position within a given social field. The social field is not to be understood as a physical space, but rather as one of various dimensions of social contexts embedding the respective capital resources, the setting in which agents are located according to their social positions. In fact, a field is an intrinsically relational term, being the result of the agents' practice (and their respective habitus) and applied capital (economic, social, or cultural). Power, or more generally the capacity to implement interest, is the crucial generative principle at work in a given social field: a field comes into existence with the corresponding perception of certain contested capitals - the struggle over the appropriation of those capitals constitutes the social arena of action with all its differences in position of social actors. Social fields interact with each other, they are interrelated or autonomous in other cases. A basic social field is the field of power or class relations within a political organisation or beyond, other examples may be the fields of economy, law, arts, consumption or ethnicity with its specific criteria of inclusion and exclusion as a pool for collective identification. A social field features a structure, "rules of engagement" to which agents subscribe by their implicit acknowledgment of the stakes. Organising and mobilising an ethnic uprising against a central government can be an implicit

acknowledgment of the social positions being intrinsically linked to the postulated markers of ethnicity as a result of continued government's propaganda. In this case, the ethnically argued social positions have been internalised as dispositions by the agents situated in the field. The internalised individual dispositions are always a reflection of the perceived social positions within an acknowledged field. As has been clearly illustrated in the previous chapters, interaction between social agents and the external structures as well as among each other always passes through the filters of the habitus as a generative principle affecting the practice (*modus operandi*) and as a structured scheme influencing the individual dispositions (*opus operatum*). The habitus as a shared subjective system of perception and evaluation reflects the structure of the social field and the distribution of capital within it. Understanding 'capital' in its broadest sense enables us to proceed towards a "*general science of the economy of practices*" (Bourdieu 2000: 183), a comprehensive approach capable of explaining seemingly irrational and non-economic practice as methods of profit maximisation. The introduction of symbolic capital as a transformed state of material capital into the theory of economy provides a way of understanding human practice in terms of interest implementation and rationality, especially in the context of emerging violent social conflicts. "Symbolic capital, a transformed and thereby *disguised* form of physical 'economic' capital, produces its proper effect inasmuch, and only inasmuch, as it conceals the fact that it originates in 'material' forms of capital which are also, in the last analysis, the source of its effects" (*ibid.*).

Having presented the basic analytical elements of our scientific approach we shall now take a closer look at the hidden dynamics of emerging violent social conflicts and proceed towards constructing a comprehensive model capable of enhancing our understanding of otherwise seemingly incomprehensible dynamics of collective affiliation and mobilisation as well as practice usually portrayed as irrational, thus providing a wider range of options for the management of violent conflicts and their transformation into non-violent ones.

5.2. Beneath the apparent: Dynamics of a violent conflict

5.2.1. Frames from within: The trap of the beholder

The common scientific practice to approach a certain field of research is to specify the criteria and elements of analysis prefacing the central part of the work with a bunch of definitions clarifying and delimitating the matter at hand. Similarly, in the case of conflict studies various scientists acknowledge the positive and productive role of conflict as a driving force of social progress, thus discerning it from the destructive force of violence. As do many other scholars, “instead of dealing with the broad category of conflict”, Felix Kuntzsch specifically addresses the “instances of ethnic violence” as the subject of his thesis (Kuntzsch 2007: 24). Using the adjective *ethnic*, however, this argumentation implies that “ethnic conflict” is one specific form of conflict, as opposed to conflicts of interest, over resources, “clashes of cultures” or other imaginable variations of violent instances. Yet the term *ethnic*, as shall be argued in this chapter, is merely a rhetorical justification rather than an explanation, overlaid on a certain conflict situation in order to legitimise the own perception and relative position as well as the corresponding practice (be it scientific, political, military, etc.). As will be shown, *ethnic conflict* is in fact not an operative type of conflict but merely the categorising framing of a situation stipulating a certain perception reflected in the use of ordinary language (cf. chapter 4.2. and Fearon & Laitin 2000a). Rogers Brubaker argues that “ethnicity is fundamentally not a thing *in* the world, but a perspective *on* the world” (Brubaker 2004: 65), a cognitive framing process, so to speak. The insight that ethnicity, race, nationhood, culture, etc. are social constructions is a relevant step in the right direction, yet it should not and cannot be the end of the analysis, presenting the discovered construction as a thing *per se*, as an element of the chain of social logic and causality. Explaining conflict with ethnicity resembles the explanation of the mere existence of a soccer game due to the different colours of shirts worn by the opposing teams. Instead, one could proceed to ask *why* the teams wear different colours, what *function* this distinction fulfils in respect to the crystallisation of groupness and affiliation of the fan community. Such cognitive perspectives *on* ethnicity “can help specify how ‘groupness’ can ‘crystallize’ in some situations while remaining latent and merely potential in others” (*ibid.*: 18). Furthermore, ethnicity as any other kind of groupness, being structured in the habitus, is a highly relational term in respect to its specific shape and value. “Cultural boundaries” and even concepts of “boundaries” as such are situationally and contextually

variable to such an extent that their treatment as categorical seems highly questionable (cf. Cohen 2000: 5-7). The function and significance of boundaries and identity concepts become manifest in the relationship between the cognitive construction of these concepts and the social practice reflecting their functionally efficient and subjectively meaningful aspects. In fact, social practice is the only accessible template for the conceptualisation of social boundaries, for it reflects the cognitive structures of the habitus developed in the given social context.³⁹

The first counter-argument to the thesis at hand is usually that fans and hooligans supporting opposing soccer teams do not engage in fights because of the colours of the shirts, but because of the associated hatred and rivalry present between the groups. While this argument might be true for instances of drunken and otherwise socially or personally frustrated individuals engaged in violent brawls, it certainly does not apply for the vast majority of more or less sane, reasonable and rational agents, nevertheless subsumed into and labelled as ethnic groups. "The overwhelming problem of the thesis that ethnic hatred motivates the ethnic conflict we see is that, for most of the groups in conflict, relations have generally been good through most of history" (Hardin 1995a: 148 and 1995b: 35). If (ethnic) conflict is not to be attributed to (ethnic) hatred between (ethnic) groups, what role does then groupness as such play in inter-group relations? Since it is commonly perceived as a basic aspect of social violence, it follows that groupness as a cognitive process is being *activated* most strongly exactly in those instances of social violence. The relevance of soccer team identifiers (as the shirt colours) only arises in their opposition in a game or a championship. Soccer teams are useless unless engaged in soccer games. Similarly, the relevance of ethnicity as a functional process of differentiation (by inclusion and exclusion) only arises in opposition, i.e. latent or manifest conflict. Ethnic groups (or national, religious, tribal, etc., for that matter) are useless unless the activation of the respective markers of difference makes sense for certain actors in a social situation. Accepting this premise, it becomes obvious that inter-group relations have retrospectively been "good through most of history", simply because the relevance of group identification was not present through most of history. In fact, identification (and thus inclusion and exclusion) only becomes necessary as a means to an end in cases of arising interest conflicts, i.e. exactly then, when relations "become bad". To say that ethnic relations have been good over hundreds of years is a logical fallacy insofar, as the absence of conflict implies the absence of ethnicity as a relevant aspect in social relations - relations have been

³⁹ The dynamics of ethnic labelling or coding and social practice will be exemplified later in this chapter on the example of the developments in Rwanda.

good among, across and beyond, but not between ethnic groups as fundamental antagonistic collectivities.

Closely linked to this thought is the dilemma of a satisfying causal explanation of group-conflicts. Conflicts between groups as labelled and defined entities indeed lack causal argumentation, for the image of homogenous and abstract collectivities being in conflict is itself just an argument, frame or method of rhetoric justification *within* the mechanisms of the violent social conflict.⁴⁰ What in fact is going on “on the ground” is just that: specific social processes with the effect of violence and loss in human lives, *not* a group conflict *per se*. In their argumentation most analysts fail to escape this trap of perception and unintentionally reproduce the essentialistic image of inter-group conflict, captured in a closed loop of argumentation that depicts ethnic groups being in conflict because of being ethnic groups (cf. chart X in chapter X). But how do we account for the strong force of these interpretative frames and what are the underlying social dynamics of labelling and coding?

In the course of social science throughout the centuries main paradigms of interpretation concerning war, violence and conflict, including perspectives on identities, agents, action, allegiances and motivations, shifted significantly. Two central interpretative frames still have some influence in the scientific arena, one being a rather ignorant view on civil wars in a Hobbesian sense, describing agents’ actions as motivated by greed and loot. The other frame, focusing on “abstract group loyalties and beliefs”, stresses the impersonal collective enmity based on strong shared identities and cultural antipathy, relying on social concepts formulated by Carl Schmitt (cf. Kalyvas 2003: 475) and others. Yet more extensive engagement with empirical data shows us that civil wars and social conflicts are neither escalated situations of total anarchy nor binary conflicts between abstract and homogenous entities, but “complex and ambiguous processes that foster an apparently massive, though variable, mix of identities and actions” (*ibid.*). In his research Sathis Kalyvas distinguishes between the central or elite level and the local or mass level, providing a more comprehensive understanding of social

⁴⁰ It is the aim of this paper to demonstrate the basic mechanisms of violent social conflicts, illustrated on a coherent model based on a comprehensive understanding of human practice as initially presented in the previous chapters. The first step, however, is to break through the cognitive barrier of perception and recognise the image of group conflicts as a mere projection emerging from underlying social dynamics in its function as a framing device capable of creating channels for interest fulfilment. In a way this is nothing more than the basic ethnographic challenge: Understanding the social functions of Kula exchange on the Trobriand Islands, the relevance of Orishas and Loas in the Vodun system, the role of confession and repentance in the Catholic theology, or the functions of ethnicity in the mechanisms underlying violent social conflicts. In all of these cases the perceived phenomena are not basic natural constituents of the social world (at least not from a point of view situated outside the “sandbox”, cf. chapter 4.2.), but specific, functional characteristics of its mode of operation enabling involved actors to achieve certain things through respective practice.

violence than both Schmittian and Hobbesian interpretations are capable of. The problem of interpretation, so Kalyvas, is often the empirical basis of “artifact or biased and incomplete data, as well as overaggregation” (476), leading to the simplified image of binary, antagonistic group conflicts. The validity of such labels as postulated by the central actors, however, is being analytically challenged by recognising the disjunction between the central (elite-based)⁴¹ master cleavages and local dynamics, which nevertheless influence each other (cf. *ibid.*: 481 and the following chapters in this paper). The realisation that a social conflict is multi-dimensional, necessarily reflecting the hierarchic structure of the field, provides us with a differentiated view on the agents of violent conflicts: The central level of agency capable of initiating, sustaining and profiting from a conflict, situated at the centre of a cluster node defined by its interest in the conflict (cf. chapter 5.2.3.), and the peripheral level of agency capable of supporting the cluster node’s interests and executing its policies whilst implementing their own interests. While there is a number of factors relevant for actors not primarily interested in the conflict to nevertheless engage in acts of violence (cf. chapter 5.2.7.), we shall first focus on the locus of emerging violent social conflicts where the control over the definition of meaning of actions and their interpretation accordingly to available frames is situated, i.e. the political entrepreneurs and individuals involved in the leadership of social movements. Since social violence within a political system is not a recognised form of dominance,⁴² at least not in its widest abstraction as defined by International Law and the responsibility of a state vis-à-vis its population related to the recognition of its sovereignty, actors engaging in violence as a more efficient means of interest implementation than through institutionalised channels of conflict resolution (or in cases these collapsed or are lacking altogether) have to undertake efforts to efficiently disguise the illegitimate process by framing the issues in ways that allow them to rally public support. With regards to content this may involve exaggeration of the hostilities of others and magnifying the likelihood of conflict without preventive action, yet the structural means activating “ethnic” or group-conflicts only came into existence with the emergence of mass-mediated informational societies. Hence the control of the media by the involved elites is a crucial aspect of perceived instances of “ethnic conflicts”, observable in every empirical case (cf. also Lake & Rothchild 1996: 54). Apart from the fact that interpretative frames propagated by conflict elites through media channels and

⁴¹ Despite the connotations of the term “elite” resulting from its use in Critical Theory and Marxist-based scientific approaches to social domination in capitalism, in the context of this paper the concept is to be understood in its broadest sense, i.e. encompassing social actors capable of exerting influence on the social field due to their accumulated forms of capital (most notably the capacity for mobilisation, legitimisation and interpretative coding).

⁴² In contrast to the potentiality provided by the legitimate *monopoly of violence* aimed at preventing social violence by guaranteeing the political organisation the relative hegemony of violence.

reproduced by external observers are the most easily accessible sources of information and “sense-making”, other barriers can make a comprehensive data gathering difficult: the mere understanding where an instance of collective violence (first defined as such) begins and ends in the continuum of war “can be determined only from within the cognitive landscape of those who are engaged in it” (King 2004: 450), i.e. the schemes of the habitus structured by the genealogy of the field and practice and internalised as generative dispositions of the involved. A more efficient methodological approach would therefore be to consult press reports in local languages and collect information from different local and regional sources. The quality of information, however, is usually very poor and dubious in situations of civil war and violent social conflict. This structural condition facilitates the instrumental manipulation of information by various actors and “suggests that claims about identity and action may be self-serving” (Kalyvas 2003: 475) and thus functionally efficient means of warfare. Interpretation, labelling and coding of actors, conglomerates of those, situations, dynamics and events is dependent on the context in which it occurs and limited by the potential possibilities inscribed in the habitus, yet in instances of violent or armed conflicts it has often “very little to do with anything intrinsic to the conflict itself” (King 2001). The social contexts and configurations of the habitus may be very different from case to case, the fundamental processes beneath the surface of emerging violent social conflicts, however, are subject to the same principles of human social behaviour and structural conditions of industrialised, mass-mediated societies exceeding face-to-face communities,⁴³ as outlined so far and exemplified in the following sections. A useful approach to the social function of collective frames is provided by Günther Schlee and Karin Werner, who define collective identities as *pluritactic constructs* (Schlee & Werner 1996: 14 et seqq.), capturing their quality as something *constructed* from authentic and real building blocks (in contrast to other approaches seeing identities as *imaginations* or *inventions*), such as existing linguistic differences, but also being subjected to taxonomical variations according to strategies and policies selecting the relevant criteria of differentiation from a wide spectrum of possibilities. Differences in dialect can be denied completely or exalted to linguistic differences, as it was the case in the breakdown of the former Yugoslavia. Strategies of argumentation can be situationally and contextually inclusive

⁴³ A phenomenon observable in such societies (which, in fact, concerns almost all of this planet’s population), is the projection of personal identity in terms of self-perception and property (directly linked to modes of consumption) onto the collective abstraction of the nation, ethnic community, religious group, transnational diaspora, etc. This allows identification and emotional attachment to constructs beyond the individual experience, something Arjun Appadurai calls “armchair nostalgia”, which he defines as “nostalgia without lived experience or collective historical memory” (Appadurai 2003: 78). In fact, collective memory is always an ideological narrative, just as the perception of a shared destiny or national, religious, cultural, ethnic, tribal or mental commonality.

or exclusive; the presence of *pluritaxis* opens a space of flexibility in selecting the appropriate framing.

Evidence suggests that the criteria of such selections and delimitations are often quite arbitrary and variable, only bound by the cognitive boundaries of 'the possible' (plausibly imaginable) as inscribed in the respective social habitus and the contextual and situational relevance for the implementation of interests. Both the Hutu of Rwanda and the Kabila-regime in the Democratic Republic of the Kongo label the Tutsi as Hamites, thus belonging to another "race" and certainly not being "real" Africans and, in consequence, not being in a position to claim land rights. The fact that this theory is based on ideas emerged in colonial times and scientifically overcome long ago (a Hamitic family of languages, for example, does not exist anymore according to contemporary classifications) seems to have no particular relevance for the practice of incitement of the people (cf. Schlee 2000b: 2). The binary image of Hutu-Tutsi rivalry as depicted in the respective propaganda and absorbed by the media and external observers is being challenged by a closer look at the social stratification. For instance, "in Burundi the *ganwa* are an important social collectivity" whose "own ethnic status has been subject to controversy. (...) In Rwanda a regional differentiation exists, with the indigenous population of the north calling itself neither Hutu nor Tutsi but, rather, Kiga or Bakiga and claiming to be a distinct and autonomous culture. Furthermore, there is intra-Tutsi differentiation between Hima-Tutsi and Banyaruguru-Tutsi. (...) Tutsi, Hutu and Twa all share the same set of clan names" (Eller 1999: 199). The cross-cutting identifications on the levels of both ethnicity and clan affiliations also remind us of the dynamics in Somalia, where external observers and analysts sadly too often confuse ethnic differentiation with clan affiliation, hence contributing to a distorted picture of the reality on the ground only complicating the ongoing conflict situation (cf. chapter 4.3.). Even in socioeconomic terms the Hutu-Tutsi relation has "at most a several hundred years history and in some places considerably less" (*ibid.*). In fact, Hutu and Tutsi were as much *achieved* as *ascribed* statuses. Acquiring enough capital to own a herd of cattle, a Hutu could "transform his social identity into Tutsi by the process of *kwihutura*, or 'shedding of Hutuness,' and *become* a Tutsi" (202). Interestingly, "not all Tutsi owned the same number of cattle, or necessarily any cattle, and not all Hutu were without cattle. Despite the ideology of Tutsi nobility, not all Tutsis were nobles, and some were poor. (...) [I]n modern times we will find that it is often Tutsi who deny the existence of ethnicity at all in Rwandan or Burundian society" (203).

The disastrous failure of the United Nations to act in April 1994 deploying a robust peacebuilding mission or at least approving an appropriate mandate for the existing UNAMIR contingents has partially to be attributed to the existing cognitive interpretation of the situation that reflected the public opinion of Western countries after 1990: What happened in 1994 was perceived as a “spontaneous outburst of hate existing for centuries between the ‘tribes’ of Hutus and Tutsis. It exploded in an uncontrollable murderous frenzy” (Neubert 1999: 155). But how did this frame of perception come into existence in the first place? What were the political, economic and social developments that led to this?

Before the colonial invasion, there was a clearly stratified society in the Rwandan kingdom. However, it was based on a social cast-like division with the possibility of social permeability following a change in the economic status. The ethnic interpretation was only invented by the German and Belgian, reflecting the dominant paradigm or *doxa* emerged in the context of the European wars as well as the colonial experience, proving to be an efficient means of hegemonic legitimisation. This ideology, overlaid on the socioeconomic stratification in the Great Lakes region, stressed the ethnic and racist primacy of the Tutsi as a convenient indirect ruling minority. The most efficient way to implement this interpretative frame was of course its dispersion through the institutional means of public education in the form of Rwandan history lessons in the various missionary schools (cf. *ibid.*: 157). In terms of schooling, the social segregation was deepened by providing Western education to the Tutsi elite, discriminating the vast majority of the population and increasing centralisation. The latent ethnicisation of society became active and consequential in the application of this framing on political events, particularly war and democracy. Similarly to the block-voting system dominating societies like India over decades, the Rwandan interpretation of democracy defined “the people” as the ordinary people in contrast to the Tutsi monarchy - a process that also reflected the change of attitude in the Catholic Church. “A ‘pure’ democracy was a majority rule, which means the rule of the Hutu majority” (161). With increasing support from the Church a “vibrant Hutu counterelite was thus in creation, the threat of which helped to unify the disparate elements within the Tutsi category (chiefs, clergy, average citizens, etc.). (...) One of the main tasks of this counterelite became to ‘awaken’ Hutu identity, to forge a solidarity bond” (Eller 1999: 219). In the context of war and armed conflict the ethnic frame provided a convenient way to implement strategies of inclusion and exclusion enabling the self-declared Hutu elite to legitimise their actions against the political opposition. Declaring the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) as an army of exiled Tutsi and placing its military threat on the same level as the political opposition in the country authorised the government to attack the opposition parties, who in turn tried to clearly disassociate themselves from the RPF. The

next logical step in this development was the use of the mass media as the press and radio, being both under strict control by the government. Racist polemic of Hutu extremists, who “formed themselves in the former single-party MRND⁴⁴ and in the new party CDR⁴⁵” (Neubert 1999: 162), was most notably reflected in the journal *Kanguka*, which published the “Ten Hutu Commandments” and the *Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines* (RTLM), which blended its dehumanising propaganda with pop music and youth entertainment, creating a climate of fear and demonising the enemy. In the propaganda battle resulting from years of censorship and control over the freedom of the press the RPF radio station *Radio Muhabura* could not compete with the ideological indoctrination of the RTLM. The relationship between ethnic labelling and coding on the one hand, and social practice and its selective application of the framing and boundary concepts on the other hand becomes clear in this context. In the existing climate of racist ideology the Tutsi defined their own practice as “Rwandans defending themselves” against Hamitic invaders (relying on the before mentioned “armchair nostalgia” or collective memory of a retrospectively constructed history, cf. Appadurai 2003: 78). Later, after the radicalisation of the violent social conflict leading to the genocide, “to be a Hutu meant survival” (Neubert 1999: 173). In sum, it becomes clear that:

“The ethnic fallacy was perpetuated in the press during the latest round of conflict in Rwanda, with constant references to the ‘tribal conflict’ and the ‘centuries of hatred between the Tutsi tribe and the Hutu tribe’ and eyefuls of sensationally horrific slaughter, the intensity and irrationality of which could only derive from some archaic age and emotion. We can now see, however, that ethnicity and ethnic conflict, even of this magnitude, is not primordial but is in fact recent - a product of economic and political contradictions and competitions introduced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; of interpretive processes acting on a past so as to reconstruct out of history a pattern of abuses and usurpations designed to reduce one group under absolute despotism” (Eller 1999: 241).

This “ethnic fallacy” or externally absorbed frame from within is the trap of the scientific beholder one has to overcome in order to fully understand the comprehensive processes and dynamics underlying what is being perceived *ex post facto* as an ethnic conflict.

⁴⁴ Mouvement républicain national pour la démocratie et le développement (MRND).

⁴⁵ Comité pour la Défense de la Révolution (CDR).

5.2.2. Whose conflict? An actor-based point of view

When developing a comprehensive theory of violent conflict dynamics it is crucial to identify the “elements which will be relevant for a theory of conflicting identities” (Schlee 2004b: 4). However, as much as “identities” do play a central role in violent social conflicts in their function as framings capable of mobilisation and legitimisation, it is a logical fallacy to presuppose that a conflict is a conflict of identities *per se*. Instead of imprudently reproducing the collective frames ascribed to social movements as abstract and impersonal reasons for certain developments, I suggest to locate the relevant developments on the micro-political level of agency - after all, it is individuals that are both subject and object of all action. Analysing Clifford Geertz approaches to “primordial sentiments” Mary Kenney also observes that structures of any kind (be it configurations of the social field or internalised dispositions producing what is being perceived as primordial sentiments) are only secondary to the developments and dynamics of social life, for they are not able to consciously operate in a self-contained manner. The focus has therefore to be put on the individual social actors, who create the resources of history through their practice and interplay with the existing structures (cf. Kenney 1996: 164). An actor-based perspective, including the correlating psychological underpinnings (cf. Hale 2004: 463), has the potential to deal with crucial phenomena left unexplained by most theories of social conflict, civil war or collective violence based on the notion of ethnicity. Any comparative examination of forms of social organisation clearly reveals that a hierarchical distribution of power manifested in the form of an elite-mass disparity or centre-periphery stratification is by far the most common occurrence of social order, often increasing with the complexity of a society rising unproportional in comparison to the institutionalised distribution and participation mechanisms, such as access to education, information and technology, participation in the political process, broadly recognised mechanisms of transparency and efficient sanctioning, etc. The concentration of symbolic capital (cf. chapter 5.1.1.) and monopolisation of other kinds of resources is in fact a precondition for the continued existence of complex industrialised societies in the contemporary global context. Undeniably it provides a social framework for effective development and competitive advancement, yet if not flanked by appropriate structural conditions providing public control it can lead to disastrous consequences. Legitimation of political practice has to be based on an equally distributed and uncensored access to the available social knowledge (as opposed to dogmatic, ideological, religious or biased legitimisation), creating a context of *doxa* emerged from the critical and constructive interplay

between heterodoxy and orthodoxy, rather than the from the suppression of the former by the latter. Mobilisation, that is the capacity to rally broad support for specific policies (or to find obedience for a specific order, as Max Weber defined 'domination' in his famous work "Economy and Society", posthumously published by his wife in 1922), should ideally be constrained by the before mentioned structural conditions, which also applies for the definition power of interpretation and social coding. Otherwise, as history shows, a few individuals are enough "to put millions in fear for their lives and cause political crises to escalate" (Schlee 2007: 40). In cases of violent social conflicts usually attributed to groups as the basic entities of analysis, these few individuals, being the chief protagonists, can act in various constellations manifested as parties, political, paramilitary or terrorist organisations, clubs and associations, bands, loosely structured gangs, social movements, churches, and so on (cf. Brubaker 2004: 15), yet never representing the majority of a population or group they claim to be acting for. The recognition of the central role of such organisations "and of the performative nature of ethno-political rhetoric (...) can remind us not to mistake groupist rhetoric for real groupness" (19).

An interview I conducted with a professional working in the Kosovo from June 2000 to January 2001 and from September 2003 to April 2004 in the field of crisis prevention and information management clearly reveals the actor-based dynamics of emerging conflicts (cf. interview with anonymous, Feb 2009: min. 20-29). The March unrest of 2004, an uprising of Albanian aggressions against the Serbs, were characterised by a set of structural conditions facilitating the eruption of violence and specific coding strategies used by a minority of the population with the highest interest in changing the current situation. On the one hand, there was a massive discontent with the UN-administration, unemployment rates amounting to 80%, rapidly rising gas prices since 2001, and a lack of perspectives for individual self-fulfilment in this context. On the other hand, a climate of ethnically motivated radicalisation and agitation has been intentionally created by various clubs such as associations of UÇK⁴⁶ veterans, though not having had a broader support among the people. According to the first hand insights of my interview partner, the real events of the *casus belli* in March 2004 could not be reconstructed, the official version however states that on 16 March three Albanian children drowned in the *Ibar* river in the village of Čabar, not far from the city of Mitrovica in the north of the Kosovo. The unconfirmed interpretation that rapidly spread through public media was that the children have been chased into the river by Serbs and their dogs in an act

⁴⁶ Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës (UÇK), the Kosovo Liberation Army, a secessionist guerilla organisation most active in the years from 1996 to 1999 fighting for the separation of Kosovo from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

of revenge. Claims like these have ever since been organised by central actors, published on the internet and backed up by testimonies and the like. The clubs immediately called for mass protests which developed their own dynamic; confidential sources however confirm that a view dozens to maybe hundreds of individuals controlled the whole protests via mobile phones and radio communications, directing the crowds against selected targets as monasteries, etc.

Russell Hardin compares the pre-emptive violence instigated by entrepreneurs and activists of self-identified ethnic groups all around the globe to “Mafia leaders, who strive to murder rivals for the leadership in order to preempt suffering further themselves” (Hardin 1995b: 41). This parallel nicely shows that social conflict is in its manifest form always a conflict between singular actors (leaders, elites) aggregating in organisational structures and mobilising executive potential. Analytically descending from the level of groups to that of singular actors also allows us to perceive variations in the cost-benefit calculations related to the interests and aspired goals at stake, carried out by activists and movement leaders as well as their followers (cf. Schlee 2004a: 146 et seqq.). Additionally to the possession of resources in various forms of capital, central actors are in a position to manipulate categories and frames to their own benefit instead of passively integrating into them due to their “social knowledge and social intelligence” (148), allowing them to handle and efficiently apply the raw materials and markers of social coding. One consequence of such applied teleological knowledge is the seemingly irrational consequence of what Günther Schlee calls “negative wars of conquest” (Schlee 2000b: 12), namely the fission of the potential dominion, loss of land and population as a consequence of warfare - processes which can be illustrated by the dynamics present in the cases of the former Yugoslavia or Somalia. The rationality of such fragmentations, however, lies in the fact that a larger amount of small states or social entities implies a larger number of potential positions for ministers and functionaries as well as the disappearance of minorities demanding political participation (cf. 13). So even in these cases we can identify processes of exclusion profitable for a category of agents, who have a good return from the business of social construction of enmity. Interests of individual actors, however, are not sufficient for a violent social conflict to emerge, even in situations of failed states and lacking institutional means of dispute resolution. To activate an efficient executive potential capable of implementing these interests, they have first to be transformed into group interests. Group interests, however, cannot be defined unless respective clearly circumscribed groups have emerged. The relationship between group formation according to the relevant processes and mechanisms accompanying its crystallisation (cf. chapter 5.2.6.) and the perception of common interests is a mutually reinforcing one, for the inclusion of actors into

the group as well as the exclusion of others have an influence on the priority of issues, shifting respectively with the composition of the group. A useful approach would therefore be the focus on actor-based interests at the centre of a cluster node and the capital / interest distribution within the cluster around the central node (cf. chapter 5.2.3.). Such an understanding of groupness in terms of centre-periphery relations also reveals the aspect of multidimensional cross-linking of strategies for the perception and implementation of interests on various social levels. While the elite of a social movement frames the reality in terms allowing it to rally support for their cause, this framing also provides the space for other actors to integrate into the operational part of the movement implementing their own interests through practice that in turn is being coded by the meta-frame, thus labelling them as a part of the “ethnic group” with all the accompanying rhetorical outgrows such as collective hatreds, etc. This circular dynamic strengthens the plausibility of the framing - once it is being absorbed by the media and external observers the individual central actors at the core of the emerged Capital Cluster Node (CCN) have acquired a considerable amount of symbolic capital allowing them a sustained continuation of the conflict as a social field for their interest implementation, a market of violence or *de facto* war economy (which, evidently or disguised, every long-term conflict turns out to be for at least some influential agents on both sides or even seemingly uninvolved individuals, organisations, states or companies). In any case, the acquired symbolic capital facilitates the most crucial aspect of violent social conflicts: collective co-ordination and the provision of regulated information flow (i.e. propaganda) to sustain and, if necessary, modify the framing according to the relevant group markers.

Recalling the example of the Kosovo riots in 2004 mentioned above, one cannot get tired of stressing the important “role of formal civic associations as inhibitors of violence” (King 2004: 434). Charles King further identifies certain indispensable conditions for the emergence of violence: (1) Some “minimally qualified activists”, (2) “social norms” or interpretative framings allowing for the prospect of violence and its legitimisation in the light of impunity, (3) a “set of accepted social rules governing how the violent game is played”, that is the capacity of efficient coordination and mobilisation, and last but not least (4) “lots of young men with nothing better to do” (440). Social frames, myths, ideologies, fears and structures of opportunities are a good basis for latent conflict with occasional eruptions of violence such as pogroms or riots, but they alone do not have the potential to lead to large-scale, sustained violent conflict. “For that, you need the same kinds of forces that sustain any war, whether ‘ethnic’ or otherwise: entrepreneurs who benefit from the violence, arms supplied by foreign powers, charismatic leadership, and plenty of bored young men” (King 2001). As can be

exemplified on the cases of Rwanda, former Yugoslavia, Somalia, or virtually any large-scale violent conflict, these young males generally come from lower social strata and/or rural areas, most of them being members of some kind of social networks.

One argument explaining the roots of ethnic mobilisation in the former Yugoslavia is that in the mid-1980s a certain segment of the political and military leadership, local and regional elites and nationalist intellectuals were threatened by economic crisis and strong demands for democratic and market-oriented reforms, in consequence provoking ethnic confrontation - "first in Kosovo and then, more fatefully, in the Serb-inhabited borderland regions of Croatia - in a successful attempt to define ethnicity (specifically the alleged threat to Serb ethnicity) as the most pressing political issue and thereby to defeat reformist challengers and retain their grip on power" (Brubaker & Laitin 1998: 433-4). This dynamic clearly illustrates how group conflict in terms of ethnic antagonisation can be constructed as a consequence of interest-based practice of coding and framing by a set of individual actors. A clear and coherent picture of the developments leading to the Yugoslavian wars is being presented by John Mueller in his analysis of the case. The dubious rise of some militant nationalists in elections, enabling them to manipulate the system and disarray the opposition, can partially be attributed to structural conditions of the ill-designed electoral system and channels for its manipulation. In 1990, Franjo Tuđman's party gained "69 percent of the seats with only 42 percent of the vote. In the same election, less than a quarter of the Serbs in Croatia voted for their nationalist party" (Mueller 2000: 45). As already stated in the theoretical discussion above, the concentration of symbolic capital and the capacity to control the media are essential prerequisites for a successful mobilisation of allegiances and legitimisation of the intended policies. Indeed, Slobodan Milošević had a firm grip on the media and pushed his campaign illegally investing public funds (cf. *ibid.*). Again, due to the electoral system, with less than half of the vote he managed to gain "78 percent of the seats. Milošević's fortunes were further enhanced because Kosovo Albanians boycotted the election, allowing his party to win that area" (46). An interesting example depicting the actual ethnic affiliation among the population that has *ex post facto* been exalted as the inevitable cause of the violent clash are the results of the following poll "conducted throughout Yugoslavia in the summer and autumn of 1990" indicating the "state of opinion after centuries of supposed ethnic hatreds and after years of nationalist propaganda" (*ibid.*):

<i>Do you agree that every (Yugoslav) nation should have a national state of its own?</i>	<i>%</i>
✓ completely agree	16
✓ agree to some extent	7
? undecided	10
✗ do not agree in part	6
✗ do not agree at all	61

Chart 6: results of a poll conducted in 1990 (cf. Mueller 2000: 46).

Both Capital Cluster Nodes emerging around the Serbian and Croatian leaderships of Slobodan Milošević and Franjo Tuđman implemented antagonistic, yet situationally and contextually different interpretative frames and concepts of group boundaries fitting the respective needs. While the Serbian nationalists and ethnic entrepreneurs were “claiming the right of Serbs everywhere to be united”, thus propagating a strategy focussing on the inclusion of further executive potential and geographical expansion, Tuđman adopted a “rhetoric of exclusionary nationalism to build his following” (Bowen 1996: 9), a mechanism which clearly emerged in mutual reinforcement with the framing of the enemy.

In any case, the constellation of relevant actors in a conflict situation should never be reduced merely to the local individuals and non-state groups involved (which unfortunately until recently have nevertheless been long ignored in the study of international relations, cf. Cederman 2002: 409). It is crucial to appreciate the obvious international entanglement of contemporary conflicts on different levels - be it the role of humanitarian organisations or other human rights organisations, foreign national military presence as for example the French troops in the Republic of Chad, EUFOR and MINURCAT (until the end of 2010), international economic interests as the Chinese oil production in Sudan and massive proliferation of small arms and light weapons (cf. Behrends & Schlee 2009: 159 et seqq.). The internationalisation of modern conflicts and the subsequent mixing of different interests extremely complicates the situation and raises the difficulty of possible transformations. Now more than ever, a diversified yet comprehensive approach to violent conflict dynamics appreciating the role of individual actors, the social habitus and the embedding field is in urgent need.

5.2.3. Capital Cluster Nodes, interests and the structural condition

One of the most successful reductionistic approaches to conflict, ethnicity and human behaviour in general was developed in the 1970s and especially 1980s. Despite all its deficiencies and criticism the rational choice theory was capable of revealing the fact that ethnically motivated behaviour was often indeed rational and profit-oriented (cf. Bös 2005: 274). In the context of power and capital, accumulation of profit has for the first time seriously been appreciated as a core principle of human practice (in a more elaborated and broadly accepted fashion than original Hobbesian approaches or ideas traceable in the liberalism of John Locke). Recognising the rationality of interest as a fundamental mechanism underlying individual motivation also allowed social scientists to perceive social structures such as judiciary systems and sets of social rules and conventions in a new light. Ever since Max Weber analysts concerned with the relationship of rationality, interest and the social field are pointing out that rational social agents are abiding rules and laws only as much as their interest in abiding them exceeds their interest in not abiding them (cf. Bourdieu & Wacquant 2006: 147). This insight arises the interesting question about the origins of rules and laws as well as their social efficiency, reflecting the inherent reproduction of specific forms of interest and subsequently power constellations. Each social field, demarcated by its respective sets of rules and conventions, presupposes a specific form of interest and activates it (cf. 149). The field, as has been extensively elaborated in chapter 5.1., structures the habitus. The habitus contributes to the construction of the field as a sense-making environment in which it is worthwhile to invest forms of capital and energy in order to gain aspired profits.

These interest-based dynamics, however, stand in a specific causal relationship to group formation, which is often confused by approaches dealing with the latter. One of the logical fallacies is that group identification and formation precedes inter-group conflict, being a logical consequence of the former in cases of clashing interests (this mistake is, *inter alia*, being made by Hardin 1995b: 25). However, evidence suggests that in fact actor-based interest conflicts *generate and facilitate* group identifications as a means of interest implementation. Even if collective grievances are present, there is no incentive for them to manifest in violence as long as not triggered by elite actors. The formation of group boundaries, being the critical focus of investigation in Fredrik Barth's approach to the issue (cf. Epstein 1978: 96), has to be distinguished from the markers or building blocks (language, customs, etc.) that they enclose. While the latter are simply characteristics of social systems, arbitrarily evolved or contextually determined, with no intrinsic potential for conflict, the

practice of meaning-attribution, coding and framing of those building blocks as a product of interest-based competitions and struggles over contested resources and capitals (or simply “elite rivalry”, cf. Eller 1999: 46) creates the conditions for conflict by demarcating group boundaries as cleavages for collective identification. “The danger is that most people, as scholars or citizens, may mistake ethnic groups for monolithic blocs with a single identity, agenda, and leadership” (*ibid.*), ignoring the processes leading to the definition of the concerned collective identity never equally shared by all alleged members. These variations of social positions within the field or “social differentiations” based on the distribution of forms of power and types of capital are in fact a universal generative principle constituting the subjective differences of perceivable objectivity (cf. Bourdieu 1998: 49). Of course, the occurrence, shape, value, and configuration of this differential principle varies in time and space, yet the fact that this distribution lies at the heart of social dynamics and leads to violent conflict in specific cases is a crucial insight for a constructive and efficient approach to sustainable conflict management. If we accept the premise that within a cluster of asymmetrically shared interests (manifested, for example, as an “ethnic group”), individuals “hold different positions in systems of production and distribution” (Bentley 1987: 40) in relation to the power structures and capital resources, it follows that any kind of collectivity or group is never a homogenous entity with equally shared qualities but a structured and dynamic system constituted by the variations of interest and the respective availability of capital in any given form. The generative principle of asymmetric distribution within what is externally perceived as a group defined by a closed set of properties implies that different clusters of actors “have different perceptions of the issues at stake. Being on the same side does not mean sharing the same goals” (Schlee 2007: 41, cf. also Cohen 2000: 2). In those instances, where the perceived goals and issues at stake seem incongruent and incommensurable between the aspirations of two or more different actors or clusters of actors, the asymmetric distribution comes in handy for those actors possessing the largest share of the capital linking them to other agents within the social field. The result is the activation of hegemony, the utilisation of the disproportionate share of total resources among individuals linked to the same cluster by virtue of their interests in the same issue (or, as the superficial, however, not entirely equivalent perception would be: among the members of a group). This link is the basis for coding mechanism subsequently applied by the elites, central actors or nodes of the social clusters exhibiting a asymmetrically shared interest in specific forms of capital, henceforth called Capital Cluster Nodes (CCNs). Under appropriate structural circumstances (more closely examined in the following sections of this chapter) this process enables the transition from latent to manifest conflict and hence to violence. “All that is

required to make the conflict between the two groups manifest are plausible definitions of group and counter-group memberships. (...) No one in group A need be personally hostile to anyone in group B for the two groups to be politically hostile simply because they have a conflict of interest” (Hardin 1995b: 29). The following chart shall illustrate the relationship between the intensity of interest in a contested issue or form of capital and the variety of actors distributed in the cluster within the social field.

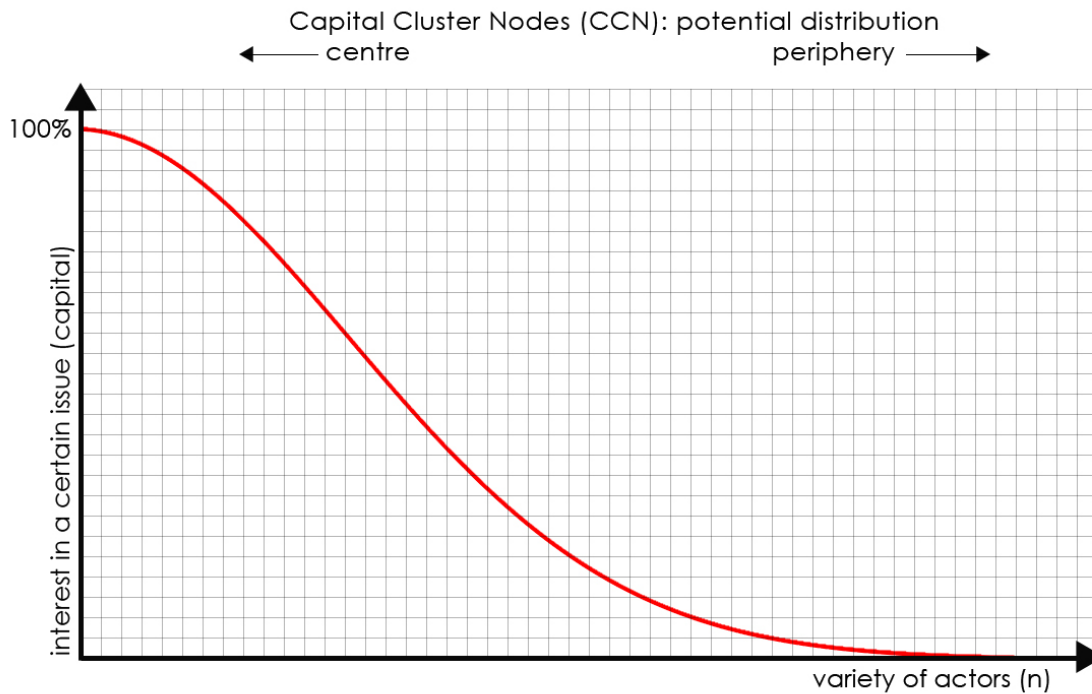


Chart 7: The relationship of relevant interest and its distribution around a CCN.

Situated at the centre of the CCN (the actual node) are the central actors, ethnic, nationalist, religious, political entrepreneurs or generally elites (as defined in the previous sections) exhibiting the most intense interest in the contested issue as well as marked by their acquired potential to actually implement those interests, surrounded by a variety of actors with a lesser degree of these qualities. The shape of this asymmetric distribution can, as mentioned before, vary in time and space. The success of the CCNs, however, is being reflected in their capacity to appropriately frame their interest applying rhetoric criteria that disguise the presence of interest as such and create a field of identification, ideally to be perceived as equally shared among all individuals included in the group necessary for a mobilisation required for the interest implementation. Applied on our chart, a “sandbox” perspective from within such a framing would (from a CCNs point of view) ideally have the label of the group identification

the vertical axis (e.g. Hutu, Muslim, Arab, Croat, Chechen, Republican, Communist, etc.) and a horizontal red distribution line running along the n-axis at 100% until it abruptly drops to 0% at the defined group boundary or cleavage. Such a perception would reflect concepts as Samuel P. Huntington's "Clash of Civilisations" or other ideologies boosting the potential for violent conflict instead of providing a framework for their understanding and transformation. Another way to illustrate the potential distribution of capital interest around a CCN is to position it in the social field and visualise the interplay of two clusters internally framed as, for instance, ethnic groups. In a normal situation and social context a random individual might have no interest in any of the contested issues, be affiliated with both to a certain degree or prefer one over the other. This is the structural *status quo* in a peaceful social field or preceding an emerging violent social conflict. However, mechanisms fostering group formation and crystallisation (cf. following chapters) as a necessary means of enforcement applied by the nodes following the clashing of elite interests under certain structural conditions heavily constrain the options and individual freedom of choice regarding the affiliation with a specific cluster. Processes of inclusion and exclusion transform the loose arrangement as depicted below into clearly defined groups with external boundaries, creating appropriate executive potential for the implementation of the CCNs interest in regard to the form of capital at hand.

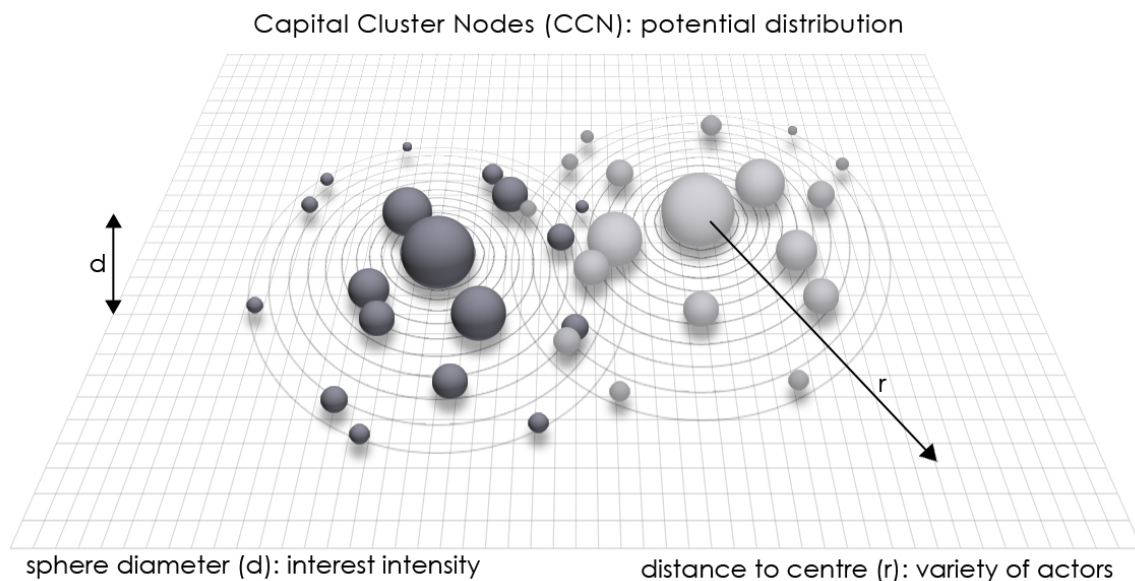


Chart 8: CCNs and the surrounding asymmetric distribution embedded in the social field.

But which modes of practice contribute to the before mentioned transformation and crystallisation of groupness? Which social dynamics facilitate mobilisation and legitimisation as two central aspects of emerging violent social conflicts and to which constraints are they subjected? In the following, let us take a closer look at the function of symbolic capital within CCNs and its relationship to practice and the habitus.

Directly proportional to the asymmetric distribution of power structures and forms of capital are the variations of discretionary power available for the respective agents. The scope of freedom to act raises with the accumulated capital. In other words, social and hence political actors possessing a relative high amount of capital (CCNs) constitute centres of power which provide for a strategical margin of variations limited by the habitus (cf. Hainzl 2009: 185 et. seq.). It follows that the distance (d) of a social agent (A) to the centre of the cluster he is linked with by virtue of the shared interest in an issue or capital resource, combined with the agent's interest intensity (i), defines the variational margin of his discretionary power (p) or freedom to act limited by a coefficient (k) consisting of the structuring of his habitus (h) and the social conditions (c) constraining the scope of possible practice (e.g. institutional or conventional limitations inscribed in the *doxa*).

$$d(A) \times i = p \times k(h,c)$$

Strategies aimed at “establishing and maintaining relations of personal dependence” (Bentley 1987: 42), i.e. relative hegemony as practice implemented in the scope of the available discretionary power still require yet another aspect necessary for sustainable dominance and cluster coordination. Coding and framing mechanisms cannot succeed in a symbolic void, but must be integrated into the conceptualisation of the world internalised as a dispositional “horizon” by other individuals embedded in the same social field. It is this “mastery of the common code of euphemisms” (*ibid.*) characteristic for successful CCNs, reflecting their social knowledge and intelligence, as defined by Günther Schlee (cf. chapter 5.2.2.). Such real or potential leaders capable of implementing their policies by accessing and changing the cognitive framework inscribed in the social habitus are “typically characterized by high levels of education and political consciousness, often urban backgrounds, and even a certain loss of contact with the very culture that they claim to represent” (Eller 1999: 43). From a systemic point of view it follows that these elites, possessing the necessary resources, are instrumental in the construction of groupness and definition as well as adaptation of the respective criteria

of identification, its essential features, boundaries and alleged goals enclosed in the proclaimed destiny, direction or future of the group and/or their retrospective perception of shared origin. Discussing chart 8 we have mentioned that various actors situated at different positions in the field have different relations to the issues constituting the CCNs. As a child raised in a pre-war German aristocratic family a random person may have no personal relation to the essential cornerstones of nationalistic concepts arising in political and intellectual circles all over Europe. In fact, he may have a couple of Jewish friends with whom he tends to play in the vast planes and meadows just outside his parents' villa. Yet constant ideological indoctrination aimed at his identification and "awakening" as a true German made him realise over the years that despite the fact that there is a lot of land all over his country just waiting to be populated, in a perhaps not so distant future his nation and hence he as a part of this nation will run out of *Lebensraum*, a limited resource that the group has to fight for. Furthermore, debates with his colleagues in various youth clubs he attends as well as the regular lecture of *Der Stürmer* and other channels of media and press provided sufficient reassurance of the primacy of the German race and the hidden true face of the Jewish people his friends from his childhood as well as their parents with all their hospitality never dared to reveal. This hypothetical example might be a vivid illustration of the discussed dynamics, yet it constitutes only one emergence of a mechanism that is fundamental to any violent social conflict. The prerequisite of inter-group conflicts is the cognitive self-categorisation of individuals or their identification with an in-group. Only this identification creates the basis for the perception, that "collectively" aspired resources are limited (cf. Zick 2005: 412). The more the central actors of a social cluster being in the process of crystallisation as a group can depict the contested resources (economic capital in the form of goods, property, industrial development, and so on, symbolic capital with its potential convertibility into material wealth in the form of power or prestige, or in some cases also cultural and social capital) as being decisive for the totality of the group, "not just for the well-being but for the very reproduction of the social and economic situation", the more probable will be "the decision to use violence" (Elwert 1999: 21). In situations where the CCNs do not have a regular army at their command or its deployment does not suffice the needs and aspirations of the leadership, a simple decision to use violence will not be enough to implement the interests at stake. In these cases the mobilisation of further executive potential will be an essential undertaking. But what are the actual resources beneath the layers of rhetoric framing applied as a means providing the framework for policy implementation? Though not entirely exhaustive, similarly to the forms of capital conceptualised by Pierre Bourdieu, Russell Hardin distinguishes three

classes of issues: “There are positional goods, such as public office, distributional goods, such as income and welfare benefits, and interactions between these two” (Hardin 1995b: 25-6).

In Rwanda positional goods of public office have been central to the escalation of violence, since the cognitive consolidation of ethnic groups involved a broader support for the respective elites’ aspirations for power. As a matter of fact, even after the victory of the RPF and the creation of a new post-genocidal political system claiming to be inclusive we are dealing with a government led by Paul Kagame that consists in its majority of “former” Tutsi (since the ethnic labels have now officially been abolished). The policies and measures concerning the conviction of the *génocidaires* are accordingly.⁴⁷ Although reconciliation and an objective processing of history have never been entirely completed, Rwanda managed to face the more pressing socioeconomic issues focussing on the goals of economic development in its Vision 2020, thus providing a functional framework capable of unifying the people under a new, teleological umbrella and leaving behind old dichotomies, at least to a certain degree.

In Yugoslavia, the disproportionate heritage of positional goods of military and political leadership (as well as a good share of distributional goods) acquired by Serbians after the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia facilitated the implementation of interests within the given margin of discretionary power under the regime of Slobodan Milošević. The importance of the accompanying social and institutional conditions and their role in developments leading to violence can be deduced from the converse argument, that “in good economic times, state-managed distributional goods matter less because private opportunities are very good. Indeed, in very good times, even the positional goods of government may be far less attractive” (*ibid.*: 27). Before taking a closer look at the social conditions, however, let us consider for a moment the constraints of practice inscribed in the habitus as well as the functional relationship between a CCN and the surrounding cluster in terms of mobilisation and the path towards violence.

Applying the theory of practice as a starting point for the analysis of developing violent conflicts it is not necessary to assume conscious manipulation and exploitation by cluster nodes in order to account for the in-group coordination and instrumentalisation of available dispositions. “The role of habitus in sustaining hierarchy is most evident where institutional mechanisms for reproducing elite domination (e.g., armies, self-regulating markets,

⁴⁷ Cf. an unpublished paper written for a seminar on Applied Legal Anthropology led by Dr. Markus Weilenmann: Meduna, Maximilian M. (2007) *Die Geburtsfehler des modernen Gacaca-Systems in Ruanda. Zwischen integrativem nation-building und selektiver Konfliktaufarbeitung*. Institute for Cultural- and Social Anthropology, University of Vienna.

educational systems, etcetera) are lacking” (Bentley 1987: 41). These functional restrictions imposed by the (however asymmetrically) shared cognitive system apply to all social agents linked within the capital cluster (again, in other words: to all members of a group). The theory of practice suggests that those CCNs will succeed in their endeavours of effective mobilisation supported by a respectively recognised legitimacy among the cluster, whose constructed and propagated “identity myths resonate with evolving configurations of habitus, practice, and experience” (*ibid.*: 47). The term “myth” as a synonym for the applied framing has a specific connotation that gains its validity from the fact that at the core those conceptualisations lies a crucial discrepancy of interest that has to be disguised for the myth to be effective and is identifiable only through the recognition of time as a variable in the equation. As contributions in game theory have proven, in a manifest conflict between two parties it is “possible for both to become worse off in a pure conflict, but not possible for both to become better off or for one to become better off without harm to the other” (Hardin 1995b: 32). The inherent high risk of failure and harmful consequences of the involved society as a collective totality reflects the reality of civil wars and “group conflicts” being almost all worse off in the short run. However, myths associated with collective identities all point out the long-term destination in a future usually exceeding the lifespan of an individual, illustrated by catchphrases like “for our children”, etc. The before mentioned discrepancy hence arises in a collectively orchestrated practice of social violence with a high probability of negative short-term consequences, yet at the same time being in the personal interest of central actors. In other words, mobilisation implies the capacity to frame something I want personally as something everybody wants, but not for themselves. Of course, what at one pole of this spectrum is pure ideological indoctrination (instances of indeed ethnically or nationally motivated violence) also opens spaces for other personal interest implementations not associated at all with the issues at the centre of the node (instances of violence occurring in the context of impunity), which, nevertheless, can simply be framed by the meta-narrative of ethnic or national conflict (cf. chapter 5.2.7.).

Mobilisation relies on recognition, especially recognition of leadership. As Bourdieu rightly observes, groups only recognise those, who publicly recognise the group (cf. Bourdieu 1998: 222). To obtain the recognition of a group, however, i.e. to create mobilising executive potential, the “group” as such has often to be crystallised in the first place. Public recognition of a not yet fully crystallised group (the transfer of symbolic capital to the addressed collectivity) through projections of specific criteria distributed in the field which, due to respective internalised dispositions such as more or less shared characteristic features (social position, language, religion, etc. as markers of identification - in any case, however, always

more or less shared interests of a random type but related to the capital or issue at stake) among the addressed agents, can indeed be absorbed by the latter, creates the cognitive impression of an affiliation and hence the group itself, which now by virtue of its awareness of commonality can as a causal reaction recognise the leadership that initiated the transfer of symbolic capital. The matrix of perceived commonality constructed out of social “building blocks” is henceforth internalised as both cause and destiny of groupness, providing a continuum for leadership to put into practice its policies, though at the same time limited by this continuum of “cultural context” or cognitive map of the social space inscribed in the habitus. Leadership “acts as an agent of group consciousness, of group awakening, altering the group to some (real or supposed) threat and diffusing or advocating a certain memory of culture, history, and circumstances” (Eller 1999: 43). The context usually present in situations of massive social imbalance, characterised by the distortion of history and its interpretation, of reports from battle zones, of claimed cultural, religious, linguistic or ethnic differences, as well as distortions of elite interests in the conflict, all embedded in a situation of social turmoil and institutional dissolution, flanked by the exclusive control of mass media, provides an optimal field for the implementation of aspired policies by central actors otherwise constrained by the limits of an intact political system. As will be examined more closely in the following chapter, CCNs use violence initially instigated by small groups, criminals and gangs supported by the respective elites by various means of capital to reinforce and construct antagonistic group identities, which in turn favour more violence when framed and coded by the appropriate myths. As Fearon and Laitin observe, the “construction of everyday primordialism from on-the-ground interactions can lead to intra- and intergroup violence” (Fearon & Laitin 2000b: 857). The provocation of violence as a means utilised by CCNs (which in the following chapter will be identified as the *first phase* of violence in a violent social conflict), fulfils the dual function (a) supporting the rhetoric claims of collective conflict, thus legitimising the propagated framing and (b) subsequently creating the ground for reactive identifications and violent responses towards the civilian population subsumed by the same group label as the perpetrators of “phase 1” violence and hence further consolidating the perception of group conflict in a steadily evolving spiral. The cause of provoked violence, however, is to be found in political struggles *within* the initial cluster, often perceived as a conflict between extremists or fundamentalist and moderates (cf. *ibid.* 865). In the run-up to the tragic events of April 1994 in Rwanda, Hutu extremists opposing the Arusha peace process, led by Agathe Habyarimana, the president’s wife, acted in the framework of the “Zero Network” death squads, the “institutional precursors of the genocide” (*ibid.*).

Undeniably, there are cases in which social movements are formed out of structural conditions of inequality, deprivation or repression. Here “ethnicity” and ethnic conflict can be regarded as a “means-based concept” (Gilley 2004: 1159), being a handy instrument for entrepreneurs or agents having the strongest interest in a change of the structural condition and possessing the respective resources for the implementation of those interests, thus constituting a Capital Cluster Node opposing the political system that created the inequality in the first place. The success of ethnicity as a generative principle lies in its potential for emotional linkage with the available dispositions of concerned individuals. Being a Jewish settler or a Rwandan farmer it appeals to me to regard myself as a Zionist or a pure-blooded Hutu with all the respective ideological connotations and inherently claimed land rights only as far as my dispositions are conditioned by respective potential emotional responses such as rage, fear or hatred acquired as a result of my personal history and socialisation. The systematical clustering or aggregation of such dispositions by social actors capable of doing so by their means of symbolic, social, cultural and/or economic capital into a strong aggregate manifested in terms of groupness may be of high significance for the emergence of social violence.⁴⁸ Ethnicity as a device for mobilisation provides the required cognitive framework for solidarity, yet it remains a fact that its occurrence and application is structurally derived. Hence, the cause and the issue is not ethnicity itself, but the structural issues lying at heart of the mobilisation. As Bruce Gilley observes, “Tamils rebelled in Sri Lanka but not in India’s Tamil Nadu, because they were systematically denied basic political, economic and cultural rights in the former from the mid-1950s onwards—not because they were inherently antagonistic to Sinhalese and certainly not because of democracy *per se*” (1159).

But emotionality as a manifest expression of so-called ethnic violence should not be overestimated in its significance for the maintenance of social violence. It certainly represents one of the main ingredients required for the instigation of a violent conflict, its concealment as a conflict of particular interests and the transformation of the cognitive perception into a materialised group conflict. Social violence, however, means *organised* violence that “needs logistics and a cool planning mind, not spontaneous emotions” (Elwert 1995: 105), in order to sustain and provide a framework for operations conducted and orchestrated by CCNs. Hence it requires, as already mentioned at several points, the presence of central actors and appropriate “*conflict-channeling* institutions” (*ibid.*) capable of reproducing the social structures that uphold the framework for the central actors or CCNs discretionary power.

⁴⁸ For further insights on the dynamics of aggregation cf. Hechter (1995), quoted in Brubaker & Laitin (1998): 440-41.

Based on the observation that the phenomenon of “switching”, i.e. the alteration and modification of identificational structures, is a rather common process fostered by the conscious redefinition of boundaries, modification of existing and creation of new labels, Georg Elwert in his hypothesis focuses on the emergence of central persons (analogous but conceptually not synonymous to what I introduced as Capital Cluster Nodes) as a process essentially linked to social switching (cf. Elwert 1995: 112 et seq. and 2004: 41 et seq.). Switching, as a collective, coordinated and synchronised process operated by central persons (as opposed to instances of individual situational and contextual switching), requires their capacity to interpret or “alter the structure of relevance” (195: 113) of perceived social priorities (a so-called *Deutungsmacht*), contributing to the creation of myths reflected by actual innovations disguised as traditions or continuity (cf. chapter 5.2.5. - “making the new seem old”). In this context it is also worth mentioning that anthropologists exhibiting a scientific habitus focused on the intention of ethnographic description easily fall prey to the policies of ideological leaders, contributing to the consolidation of frames created and modified to fit the needs of CCNs and, under appropriate conditions, leading to violent conflict. Central actors or their aggregation in CCNs exhibit the capacity of converting symbolic capital (prestige) or economic capital (wealth) into power, simultaneously being the fundamental motivation of their social practice. What Elwert calls “the irony of fundamentalism” (114) is nothing else then the distributional field structure of CCNs as depicted in charts 7 and 8: Leaders define core norms of identification and behaviour and interpret individual action in terms of its distance to the “ideal” norm or zero-point within a coordinate system. The “zero” is, of course, the place where the leaders are situated as pure incarnations of the propagated identity (cf. Hitler being the “zero” of an Aryan). The mechanisms of this relational interpretation of adequate identification with the 0-norm has also a functional effect in terms of a process identified by Günther Schlee as “purification” (cf. chapter 5.2.6.). The centre-periphery relation and the interaction of actors based on the variations in habitus and the dispositions situated within this coordinate system reminds of similar concepts focusing of the micro-foundations of civil wars and “ethnic” conflicts, such as Sathis Kalyvas’ idea of “alliance” between central actors seeking power and applying resources (capitals) “to ally with peripheral actors fighting local conflicts”, thus creating a ‘joint production’ of action” as an interlinked system “between various central and local actors with distinct identities, motivations, and interests” (Kalyvas 2003: 476). However, Kalyvas’ distinction between centre (conceptualised as centrality in terms of a political system also reflected in the geographical capital-province relation) and periphery (as locality or policies and private practices on a provincial level distant to the centre of power) in a context of

violent conflict reflects rather the relationship between macro-narrative and local disputes, than the capital intensity distribution as related to the intensity of interests at stake within a given society. Illustrating this difference, one could say that Kalyvas' model represents the vertical axis of social positions within a given field, while the concept of CCNs developed in this paper concerns the horizontal relation between social agents. What indeed is common to both approaches is the appreciation of the interaction between the central or supra-local actors and the local ones (both in terms of their interest intensity as well as systemic distance of the latter from the "top"), otherwise missing appropriate theoretical account. Both approaches recognise the interplay between agents located on different dimensions in the social system, including the variety of identifications, preferences and modes of practice, all interlinked by a micro-foundational principle Kalyvas calls "alliance" (486). Alliance, as the structural consequence of the need for executive potential to be mobilised by CCNs, allows for the integration of peripheral disputes such as personal revenge or interest implementations unrelated to the meta-conflict into the general framing of collective (ethnic) group conflict, thus legitimising the central claims associated with the ideology of the cluster nodes.

Two consequences arise from this dynamic: (1) Civilians and actors not officially integrated into the machinery of a cluster responsible for their crimes cannot be treated as passive and manipulated actors not knowing about or existing beyond the framework of policies pursued by the elites, and (2) opportunity structures created by the presence of potential "alliances" manifested in coalitions or associations may lead to alterations of the *status quo* and change or enforce the conditions facilitating the feasibility of the instrumentalisation of ethnicity as an efficient strategy (cf. Kuntzsch 207: 52), but also heavily influence the boundaries and definitions of the framings or identity labels applied, thus once more revealing the dynamic and flexible nature of ethnicity or other kinds of groupness. On a local level of existing conflict structures, Andrea Behrends and Günther Schlee notice that rapidly changing alliances are a common phenomenon (cf. Behrends & Schlee 2009: 160), sometimes appearing in rather informal, non-binding and temporary contacts strategically related to friendship, kinship, clan-affiliation, etc., in other instances forming durable associations playing a critical role in situations of social imbalance or disturbed social order. Such associations bring together "interest groups that do not readily emerge from everyday interactions" (King 2004: 445), having a major impact on the durability of communal peace or conflict respectively, depending on their relation to the strategic policies of influential CCNs and their master narratives.

In terms of structural conditions, there is a dependence between cognitive patterns inscribed in the habitus, socially crystallised in various forms such as ethnic affiliation, and the regimes

of social stratification and domination, reflected by either the political system of a society or the *de facto* power relations distributed within this society. Since we understand the habitus as a system of perception both structured by the external structures of the social field and structuring social practice accordingly to the internalised cognitive constraints, it logically follows that the dimensions of the habitus incorporating ethnic affiliation are directly linked to the structural conditions (primarily the history of the surrounding political and economic systems) and upon activation provide a space for agency within the related cognitive matrix. In a nutshell, the dependence can be illustrated as follows: “Rapid political and economic change can severely disrupt regimes of domination. Given that domination operates through the habitus and cannot be apprehended consciously, breakdowns in regimes of domination (...) are likely to be experienced indirectly, often as crisis of ethnic identity” (Bentley 1987: 43). In a contemporary social context of global interdependency, especially in the economic sphere, changes in the structural environment of a given society are rarely the consequence of internal dynamics but either side-effects or direct results of larger processes. These changes, however, once they happen, potentially alter the structures of interest and its distribution within the affected social field. The correlating alteration of the distribution of power relations and capitals as a consequence of severe changes contributes to the emergence of new or manifestation of latent centres in the form of CCNs, each with a varying symbolic understanding of or perspective on the changing field. An initially polycentric situation (being previously present or being a consequence of the breakdown of centralised hierarchical structures) gradually gives way to the restructured field dominated by the most capital-intensive cluster nodes. Structural domination is accompanied by symbolic domination, reflected in the assigned meanings or “sense-making” processes strategically more or less focussing on the significance of ethnicity as a relevant aspect for power stabilisation and expansion. Let us consider for a moment the case of Darfur. The dominant framing coded by the most capital-intensive cluster nodes, in this case the political elites in Khartoum, and absorbed by the mass media worldwide is that of an ethnic conflict between the “Arab” political strata at power in Sudan, claiming to represent the majority of its country’s population, at least in the northern part, and “African” ethnic groups (such as the Fur, Massalit and Zaghawa) located in the western province of Darfur and eastern parts of the Chad. Yet the conflict would probably never have manifested in such a form without structural conditions totally beyond the control of local agents such as the expansion of the Sahara, forcing nomadic groups from northern parts to migrate into populated areas further in the south of the region. The identification with collective labels and group affiliations, however, is never determined by the contested resources, but follows the logic and dynamics highlighted and examined in

this chapter. In different cases, the “logic of identification may be the same, regardless of whether the contested resource is oil, water, cattle, or land” (Schlee 2004a: 149). In tense social situations following significant changes in the structural environment a latent conflict may still remain latent and eventually be resolved in a peaceful way, unless the incentive structure correlates with dramatic institutional collapses or transformations and the leaders’ option to engage in violence as the most efficient means to implement the interests at stake. In fact, “peaceful and even cooperative relations between ethnic groups are far more common than is large-scale violence” (Fearon & Laitin 1996: 715). Intact institutions work to maintain disputes at a non-violent and socially acceptable level, containing the potential of violence as an efficient shortcut to the achievement of aspired goals. The alternative is eventually a somewhat (on closer inspection, however, as has extensively been elaborated - not absolutely) Hobbesian perspective on social life, where the logic of preemption starts to dominate potentially or actually threatening relations. What remains true in any case is that institutions as a structural condition are a barrier to violence that falls with the failure of statehood or destabilisation of governments as soon as conflict cleavages and group boundaries are previously already well defined. After the shooting of an airplane on 6 April 1994 with president Habyarimana on board, the long history of propagated ethnic cleavages, the well defined collective frontlines and the planned and coordinated strategy of escalating violence lead to an intentional translation of the initial *first phase* of strategically orchestrated violence to a spiral of killings culminating in a genocide of more than 800,000 people. “As the number of killers rose, the initially strong organisational structure disappeared. The command structures could demand violence but not specifically direct and control how it was executed. The state monopoly of violence was completely dissolved” (Neubert 1999: 171). But control and direction of violence was not a necessary requirement anymore, since the radical framing of the dominant CCN was well inscribed in the cognitive patterns of the majority of the perpetrators’ habitus: not victory, but the complete destruction of the enemy.

Collier and Hoeffler (2004: 569 et seqq.) identify a set of further structural conditions significantly facilitating the outbreak of civil wars or rebellions: Opportunities arising from atypically low cost of implementing violence (such as the availability of unusually cheap conflict-specific capital), strikingly low foregone income (reflected in the proxies of income *per capita*, male secondary schooling, and the growth rate of the economy). The focus obviously lies on young males since they represent the main pool for recruitment. Other dimensions of opportunity can be atypically weak military capabilities of the government and the lack of social cohesion constraining recruitment to one of the available labels of group identification. In radical contrast to everyday perceptions and dominant paradigms in the

social sciences, their research results suggest that “societies characterized by ethnic and religious diversity are safer than homogenous societies as long as they avoid dominance. We have suggested that diversity makes rebellion harder because it makes rebel cohesion more costly” (588).

At last it is to be said that large-scale and high-intensity ethnicity, nationalism or religious radicalism are phenomena bound to the structural context of modernity. For their sustainable efficiency they all require “extensive communication, the very communication that also spreads the cosmopolitan vision of humanity” (Hardin 1995b: 34). Ideological reproduction of “ethnic conflicts” by mass media and thus the wider public takes place by uncritically absorbing the propagated myths and in many cases obvious lies (being rhetoric strategies of legitimisation) coded by Capital Cluster Nodes as facts and not bothering to analyse individual motivations for engaging in violence. In the following sections a closer look at the dynamics of mobilisation and legitimisation as well as mechanisms of and conditions for identification and group-formation shall be taken.

5.2.4. Mobilisation and legitimisation: Sparking the flame

Bearing in mind what has been said so far, it may seem obvious that accompanying the developments leading to the emergence, perpetuation and proliferation of social violence there is an essential interplay between an elite’s speech acts as well as their public reception on one hand, and its deliberate actions of instigating violence and mobilising executive potential on the other hand. The apparent consequences resulting from the consideration of the theory of practice, however, clearly demonstrate that strategies of interest implementation cannot simply be translated into a form of collective mobilisation based on unidirectional and fully intentional manipulation. If, in the following chapter, we talk about “rallying support”, “instrumentalisation”, or similar expressions aimed at the mechanisms that link masses to the policies of Capital Cluster Nodes, the encompassing dimension of the habitus as a matrix, both enabling and limiting an actor’s capacity to successfully implement his interests, has to be taken into account. “Thus, in order to account for ethnic group formation and mobilization, we must identify dimensions of common experience and habitus that underlie the ability of ethnic leaders to mobilize their followers. In addition, we need to analyze how ethnic appeals implicate conceptions of personal and group identity in order to account for their effectiveness” (Bentley 1987: 47). In contrast to some constructivist approaches that fall short

of further developing their own premises, the theoretical concept at hand, rooted in the theory of practice, does not require the *invention* of ethnic symbols or fictional aspects of collective identification coming into existence in order to be manipulated and instrumentalised for mass manipulation. Michel Foucault has observed that depending on the initial social situation, “ethnic mobilization may represent an attempt to revitalize existing self-conceptions and modes of domination, or it may reflect a particular kind of epistemological break, a shift in conceptions of personal identity as new modes of domination are instituted in response to changed environmental circumstances” (45). In any case, group mobilisation and hence the homogenisation of cluster or class habitus relies on the “homogeneity of the conditions of existence” (Bourdieu 2000: 80), enabling social practice to be cognitively synchronised (in terms of ascribed meaning) without the necessity of intentional manipulation or active coordination of a passively following collectivity. The commonality of shared features in the habitus is the basic precondition for successful mobilisation. In fact, it is nothing else then the concordance of dispositions between the mobilising actors and those whose perspective on the social world they reflect or claim to reflect - creating a field of *doxa* once consciously articulated as commonality (c.f chapter. 5.1.3.). In a random conflict situation, the optimal mobilisation mass is the “group” of individuals most adequately equipped with dispositions that serve the purpose of the capital cluster’s interests (e.g. the recruitment of pirates from the pool of former fishermen deprived from their natural resources by transnational corporations and interfering nation states massively fishing in the adjacent coastal waters). At the same time the concordance of cognitive structures of the habitus, such as perception and meaning overlaid on the respective social markers constitute the framework for possible mobilisation. Religion, language and occupation may be building blocks for the construction of a cognitive matrix (habitus) in turn reflected in the systems of dispositions as religious knowledge, linguistic competence or professional mastery. If homogenous meaning is being attributed to the structures reflected in the embodied competences acquired in the course of a certain history (cf. Bourdieu 2000: 81), it can provide a generative scheme for successful mobilisation. The fact that I believe in the Great X, speak language Y and work as a Z does not provide any substance for mobilisation *per se*. If, however, I share the belief that the Great X is a better god than the Small Q, that R is just a dialect of language Y and all Zs have for decades been brutally oppressed by the reign of S, then indeed does XYZ provide an optimal framework for social agents capable of and interested in doing so to mobilise against QRS.

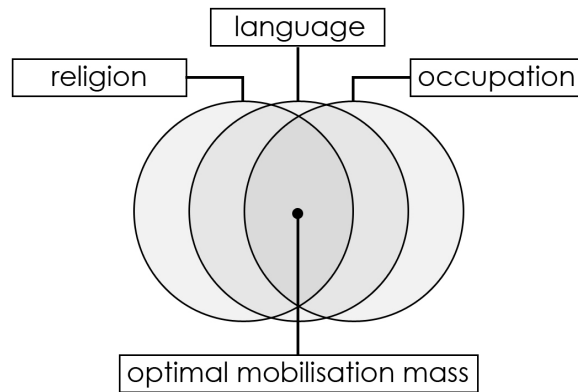


Chart 9: The optimal mobilisation mass in a conflict situation where the cognitively ascribed meaning attached to a particular religion, language and occupation provides a relational structure for successful mobilisation. The “building blocks” are random and may be substituted as the case may be.

Once the concordance is given, the need for explicit rhetorics of legitimisation is diminished and may even be reduced to the function of situational and contextual adaptation of the respective symbolical values attached to the objective structures. In cases of total congruency or ideal *doxa*, we are confronted with “the absolute form of recognition of legitimacy through misrecognition of arbitrariness, since it is unaware of the very question of legitimacy, which arises from competition for legitimacy, and hence from conflict between groups claiming to possess it” (Bourdieu 2000: 168). Beyond the above hypothetical example lies the reality of much more complexly structured social fields, where the competition for legitimacy is a common process often leading to mutual confirmation of the respective claims, if constructed in an exclusive manner. The crucial point is that no individual has just a single identity - XYZ may be characteristics defining my relation to the field of XYZ (or QRS), but they may vary in relevance in relation to A-Z, both in priorities ascribed by me and other social actors. Yet if the relative meaning of XYZ as perceived aspects of my identity raises, its conscious emphasis also raises the affective or emotional dispositions linked to it by virtue of being a core property of my self-definition. This raise can only be a product of forces structuring the habitus as well as my own practice being conditioned by the very habitus. In sum, what might be perceived as “reactive” cognitive positioning is a process always passing through the matrix of the habitus and hence never a direct response to exterior circumstances. Having clarified the “texture” of mobilisation and legitimisation as processes being embedded in a very specific cognitive context, let us now consider the relationship between the two in regard to the emergence of a violent social conflict.

The significance of framing as a mechanism essential to the further development of a conflict is almost always underestimated by the public perception and everyday observers, quite often also by the respective scientific interpretations relying on the former. Over the years International Conflict Management has developed into a solid discipline dealing with “objective” issues at hand, engaging in missions and projects such as election monitoring, securing of buffer zones, conducting Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants into society, providing and securing humanitarian aid, and many other activities. Yet no particular attention is being paid to the “subjective” or cognitive concerns bearing an immense potential for efficient *positive* conflict transformation (from violent to non-violent). Examining the dynamics beneath *negative* conflict transformation (from non-violent to violent), it becomes clear that the “rhetorical battle for control over defining the event can thus be as much a part of the contestation as violence itself” (King 2004: 449). Being closely related to the broader field of discourse analysis, the so called “mobilisation frames approach” (cf. Máiz 2003: 200 et seq.) is one of the available methods focussing on the dynamics of framing and hegemonic adaptation of national or ethnic narratives. Different contexts of time and space form different *cognitive maps* of the concerned collective identity, giving it the quality of an imagined community (cf. Anderson 2006), being subject to a never-ending process of redefinition and reinterpretation. The predominant focus on “objective”, solid properties of social constellations in conflict analysis and management has hence to be broadened by appreciating the significance of meaning-attribution, framing, coding and discursive mobilisation as central elements of legitimisation, i.e. the implicit mutual recognition of modes of practice being embedded in a narrative context with a highly instrumental quality. The problem with considering the “solid” reality only is that its perception is primarily dependent on the attached meaning, which, in cases of social violence in a context of structural instability and lacking transparency, is often highly distorted. A characteristic of distorted framing is the symbolical ascription of asymmetric values to identification, always salient in cases where a setting is being framed in terms of a group-conflict. In the broadest sense, this asymmetrical coding (contributing to self-identification and hence group crystallisation) can be subjectively illustrated as “We are we and not them because we are better in any random quality”, i.e. the classical dichotomy of *good vs. bad*. “Ethnicity is consciousness of difference and the subjective salience of that difference. It is also mobilization around difference” (Eller 1999: 9). Ethnicity, as a recognised “solid” category of social stratification with implicit claims, rights and privileges, is nothing but a materialised product of the consciousness of difference and respective organisation on the basis of a random trait (be it X, Y, Z, or a combination of these). The power of such symbolic

differentiation lies in the concealment of its arbitrariness: Either the asymmetric relation between XYZ and QRS is being overlaid and linked to structural conditions of inequality (in which case the structural conditions are the issue and not the ascribed meaning in terms of XYZ vs. QRS), or the delimitation is being created on a binary logic of subjective morality: Since “we” are good, “they” must be bad. The “easiest option for the definition of ‘we’ is the creation of foes represented as a negative print of the morality which one would like to have as a self-description” (Elwert 1995: 107). In many cases the externalisation of internal problems functions as an efficient mechanism of mobilisation, even though internal support should be diminishing in the light of the existing problems. Thus, after political, economic or social decline being the result of either severe crises or simply incompetence of leadership, power-holders can maintain their position by linking the negative issues to specific traits distributed in the social field in such a way, that they can be subsumed into a coherent group and antagonised (cf. the racist ideology of the *Judenfrage* in the first half of the 20th century, culminating in the genocide of the Second World War in Nazi-Germany and occupied territories). Similar externalisations of social problems onto a minority group in order to symbolically “purify” the category of one’s self-affiliation are salient in a variety of other examples. Ironically, the truth is sometimes the unpleasant that one seeks in his enemy but fails to accept about himself. Even more ironically, the symbolic purification of an in-group by externalisation of problems does by no means contribute to the solution of the problems at hand, but, once successfully implemented, simply administers to the legitimisation of current elite’s policies often themselves being the root causes of the problems. As argued in the first section of this chapter, successful implementation of such cognitive asymmetries requires at least a minimal dispositional correspondence of the habitus, which then facilitates clientelism (based on a dependence on a random type of capital) as a building structure for coordinated violence. Such a comprehensive understanding also sheds some light on the question “why publics follow?” - contrary to the generic understanding of mobilisation the approach presented in this paper renders the question relatively obsolete. “Followers” are not really following at all (cf. also Fearon & Laitin 2000b: 868), but rather acting within a social narrative or mobilisation-frame that (a) enables them to act in such a way, (b) enforces specific actions while suppressing others, and (c) allows their actions to be interpreted via the symbolic meaning overlaid on the traits linking selected individuals into a cluster. This “mobilisation” of contextualised practice is often enhanced by the creation of spaces of impunity, enabling peripheral actors to commit acts of violence unrelated to the issues of the centre or CCNs, yet also being subject to (c).

Symbolical evaluation and valuation, meaning-attribution and framing of shared traits and clusters of traits as a foundation for self-identification arise in the dichotomy to their inverted state, as a boundary of definition and comparison. The complementary concept to *identity*, on this note, is *difference* (cf. Schlee & Werner 1996: 16). The logic of *how* enmity is constructed as a social process is quite obvious and, in fact, mostly irrelevant in understanding the dynamics of emerging violent social conflicts. Instead, the crucial question to be asked concerns the tactical considerations of in-group formation and the generation of difference, namely *why* is enmity being constructed? (cf. also Schlee 2000b: 2 et seqq.). The apparent answer deducible from the previous chapters is an actor's or CCN's desire for interest implementation, yet the tactical modes of operation are highly variable, depending on the contextual and situational circumstances. In one scenario the criteria for inclusion and exclusion can correspond to the cost-efficiency of a given operation: the minimal amount of allies (the smallest Capital Cluster) necessary for the interest implementation constitutes the optimal and cheapest mobilisation mass, in another case strategies of differentiation can be bound to the cognitive matrix of the habitus and its respective set of rules: the extension of a cluster in classical segmentary lineage systems requires the invocation of shared ancestors, placing the size of the group in a direct relationship to historical depth. This type of group formation, however, implies that "unwanted" actors (not being linked to the centre by virtue of shared interest or capital relation, but by the structural bond of shared ancestry) have often to be included into the in-group, thus hindering the intentional policies of the CCN. Günther Schlee assumes that Somali warlords are a case of central actors subjected to this segmentary logic (cf. *ibid.*: 10) reflected in the respective clan-affiliations. Cost-benefit considerations concern all individuals linked into a Capital Cluster: peripheral agents might "join a group" simply because there are no costs in doing so or, if there are costs, they "may also expect specific rewards or punishments" (Hardin 1995b: 17) tailored to the intensity and quality of their contributions. Indeed, evidence suggests that commitment to a group's postulated goals in many cases does not even constitute a necessary prerequisite for participation in group-related activities. Once a cognitive framework in terms of legitimisation is present, developed or established, the essential strategic problem remains successful coordination of both, in-group relations securing a CCN's hegemony and external interaction. Paradoxically, the "costs of producing a sanction and the costs of suffering one need not be in any way logically related. The story of Lebanon and Somalia is one of the trivially cheap production of dreadful harms" (20).

While the emergence and adaptation of the cognitive framework (e.g. particular connotations of a given ethnicity label, related to claims and demands indirectly reflecting the interests at stake) as a matrix providing the context for legitimised practice primarily depends on the investment of symbolic capital supporting the credibility of speech acts, the actual mobilisation (unified under a meta-narrative by the speech acts) is based on a heterogeneity of decisions, preferences, choices and their interdependent relations. Mobilisation, or - from a peripheral point of view - the decision to support a policy or movement elaborated at the centre of a capital cluster, is by no means a uniform, collective move. In each and every conflict situation there is a variety of different structural incentives for actors at different positions in the social field to decide in favour of mobilisation. In any case, a sustained, large-scale violent conflict passes through what I call a *two-phase-sequence* of manifested social violence. Being ultimately the core argument against any theory of collective violence based on ancient hatreds and equally shared antagonisms between two or more homogenous groups, I argue that an eventual final stage of widespread violence involving a variety of actors (aligned accordingly to boundaries and cleavages rhetorically defined during the emerging conflict) is *always* preceded by a first phase of instigated small-scale violence. This *Phase-I* violence functions as a deliberate ignition for further re-active violence, which both, under appropriate circumstances and the right timing, can be easily coded by the CCN as eruptions of group hatreds and antagonisms, in turn providing a basis for subsequent violence as an efficient means of interest implementation.

Let us assume there is a structural conflict of interest between you and me - for example, we both want the same ice cream, but there is only one left and none of us is willing to share. We started arguing and indeed had a long public quarrel leading to the following situation, with plenty of quite absurd arguments, yet emotionally plausible in our rhetorical fight over the ice cream. Now if, under such circumstances guaranteeing your affective response, I punch you and tear your green shirt, there is a high probability of you punching back. If someone asks me why you punched me, I will explain that it was due to the colour of my shirt - you don't like blue shirts, and, as a matter of fact, I hate green shirts (clarifying why blue shirts are superior to green ones). My friends wearing blue shirts might start to fear you, some of them will share my antipathy towards green shirts and attack you and others wearing a green shirt, especially when I promise them free ice cream. You will warn your green shirt friends about the threat posed by blue shirts and I will inform mine that green shirts are really bad and something should be done about that. Many of my friends don't give a damn about the colour of your shirts, but they have other unrelated disputes with your friends, hence they engage in the fighting. Others simply want the ice cream as a reward, yet others are forced by my threat of

never getting an ice cream again. Our initial punching, framed by the antagonistic dichotomy of shirt colours, transcended from *Phase-I* to *Phase-II* violence. External observers just perceive the fight of blue against green, while I enjoy my ice cream and blame green for the lack of ice creams for my blue shirt combatants, making it rational for them to further prosecute you, and so on. (In the meantime, using some of my blue executive potential I manage to get a good grasp on other ice cream resources and start my own *gelati*-business, selling ice cream to whoever pays best - ironically the green shirts).

That example might seem ridiculously banal and totally unrelated to the much more complex processes and dynamics of violent social conflicts. But is it really? Ten years ago John Mueller published an article titled “The Banality of Ethnic War”, scrutinising different cases of “collective group conflicts” and providing clear facts from the reality “on the ground”. Let us consider some of those details taken from the historical developments in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda (cf. Mueller 2000: 42-62). Evidence confirms that the perpetrators in the first stages of violent conflicts under way in Croatia and Bosnia were small or very small “bands of opportunistic marauders recruited by political leaders and operating under their general guidance” (42), such as street gangs, soccer hooligans and criminals intentionally released from prison. Violence, looting and destruction was the result of acts committed by usually drunken gangs roaming around, supported by elites striving for power after the transition from the Socialist state. The fact that (external) public perception did not recognise this criminal marauding as such is to be attributed to the intense propaganda battle of framing the instigated violence in nationalistic terms. Moreover, the blunt repetition of internal interpretations by outside observers is the most simple and basic perception, the easiest way to approach an unfamiliar conflict situation. Instead of simply dismissing all violence as “criminal”, observers tend to automatically code it as “political” (ethnic, nationalist, religious, etc. - cf. Kalyvas 2003: 484). “Milošević’s party often paid mobs with free food, transportation, and liquor” (Mueller 2000: 46), easily orchestrating massive public demonstrations, provoking respective counter-demonstrations by the opposition. Much of the violence that erupted in Yugoslavia was carried out by sporadically empowered thugs - the only group willing to actually use violence, since the regular Yugoslav People’s Army quickly disintegrated at the beginning of the conflict. Serb soldiers did not know what they were supposed to fight for, some “150,000 or more quickly emigrated or went underground. (...) Overall, only 50 percent of Serbian reservists and only 15 percent in Belgrade obeyed orders to report for duty. (...) Part of the solution involved arming the locals, particularly in Serb areas of Croatia and Bosnia” (48). This practice integrated the civil population into the framing of the elite’s claims,

but it did not account for the intensity and brutality of violence retrospectively interpreted as civic violence based on ethnic hatreds. In fact:

“The most dynamic (and murderous) Serbian units were notably composed not of committed nationalists or ideologues, nor of locals out to get their neighbors, nor of ordinary people whipped into a frenzy by demagogues and the media, but rather of common criminals recruited for the task” (Mueller 2000: 49).

Similarly was the case in the run-up to the Rwandan genocide in 1994. The main impetus of the killings can be attributed to a relatively small amount of specially trained Hutu, clustered in paramilitary organisations such as the infamous *Interahamwe*, which had its origins in soccer fan clubs, recruiting jobless young males to be trained and indoctrinated. The best structured core units consisted of “the Presidential Guard, numbering 700–1,500 men, and the Hutu army, which consisted of some 50,000 men, most of them hastily recruited in the previous few years from landless peasants, the urban unemployed, and foreign drifters who had chiefly signed up not for ideological reasons, but rather for the guaranteed food and drink (each man was entitled to two bottles of beer a day, a luxury by Rwandan standards) and for the opportunity to loot, because pay was low and irregular” (59). Again, often-drunken criminals, hooligans and individuals motivated by various opportunistic reasons joined the ranks of the perpetrators once the well-planned and organised genocide began, giving momentum to the transition of violence from *Phase-I* to *Phase-II*. The trigger for the implementation of the coordinated violence was the shooting of the presidential airplane and hence the death of Habyarimana. In a structured operation, all those “who opposed the Hutu power fractions were branded as ‘accomplices’ of the Tutsi army. The army and the elite troops of the presidential guards used lists already prepared to track down all the prominent opponents” (Neubert 1999: 166). The CCN managed to successfully disguise the structured operational part of the initial violence as well as the history of planning the genocide for years and hence the elite’s responsibility for what followed, and sell it as a spontaneous outburst of long lasting hatreds. The created space of impunity allowed the peripheral agents involved in the massacres to implement their interests with minimum justification, allowing them to steal, kill, rape and drink for free. Analogous to the case of the former Yugoslavia, “criminals were released from jail” and supported by militant extremists to commit murders. The radical core of the movement “often forced other Hutus, on pain of instant death, to join the killings. (...) Many Hutus, however, did hide and protect Tutsi neighbors” (60). Based on a study by African

Rights in London,⁴⁹ Mueller argues that around 2 up to maximum 9 percent of the male Hutu population over the age of thirteen was actively involved in the genocide. Taking into account the tragedy of the events of 1994 and the still dominant perception of the genocide being a consequence of collective group hatreds, this number shows an astonishingly low amount of people willing to kill or die because of their attitude towards ethnicity (or, for that matter, any other reason).

The mechanisms of violence are, in fact, almost as banal as the conflict between green and blue shirts. An unbiased examination of actual conflict developments will always reveal the inherent discrepancy between the tactical mobilisation of *Phase-I* violence and the framing provided by elites to activate efficient legitimisation of the former. As the examples illustrated above clearly show, “violence [at least in its first stage, note] in Yugoslavia and Rwanda was carried out chiefly by small, ill-disciplined, and essentially cowardly bands of thugs and bullies” (Mueller 2000: 43), and by no means the result of incommensurable antagonistic ethnic hatreds ranging back to the *Kosovo polje* or the invasion of some Hamitic tribes. The role of common criminals in the instigation of social violence seems to be an universal phenomenon, identifiable in such diverse instances as the American War of Independence or the Chinese Civil War (cf. Kalyvas 2003: 476). The myth of ethnic conflict or other variations of “group conflicts” is apparently nothing but a presentable and efficiently applicable lie that unfortunately gained much ground in public perception and in the realm of social sciences.

Nevertheless, what remains undeniable is that the success of a violent operation is dependent on the absorption of a framing at least as much as on the effective mobilisation of executive potential. In other words, would relevant actors in the UN bureaucracy as well as national representatives have read, understood and appreciated this paper despite opposing national interests, the probability of a successful, robust and rapid international military intervention and thus the prevention of the loss of thousands of human lives would have been much higher.

In any case, the quintessence of the above discussion is the insight and recognition of the interplay between rhetorical acts of speech (propaganda, framing and coding), grounded in the social matrix of the habitus, and the mobilisation and instigation of violence as an operation affirming the propagated frames and contributing to a mutually reinforcing spiral effect. Usually the generation of both violent incidents and respective interpretations are processes actively pursued by CCN long before the escalation of violence and in principle discernible by critical, aware and knowledgeable observers. The United Nations International

⁴⁹ African Rights (1995) *Rwanda: Death, Despair, Defiance*. Rev. ed. London: African Rights.

Tribunal for the Persecution of Persons responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991 (ICTY) found that parallel structures created out of the State Security Service, members of the Ministry of Interior of Serbia, as well as party and policemen in the Serbian areas of Croatia supportive of Milošević's party, enabled Milošević to manufacture *"incidents, which provoked reaction and fear among the Serbs, ... and intensified intervention by the Croatian police. This spiraled up into intolerance, violence, and eventually war"*.⁵⁰ It is, however, not the violent incidents *per se* that provoked reaction and fear, but the appropriate *coding* of those incidents. Put differently, the crucial function of legitimisation as a framing process is "not that ethnic identities are constructed, but that violence is socially constructed as 'ethnic'" (Fearon & Laitin 2000b: 869).

The following chart illustrates the interplay of all central dynamics being at the heart of an emerging violent social conflict and exhaustively described above. In the chapters to come a focus on the processes leading to collective identification and group crystallisation as well as the emergence of opportunity structures (e.g. manifested in the form of a "war economy") as a "gateway" for social actors to aggregate within the field according to the Capital Cluster distribution.

⁵⁰ Prosecutor v. Milan Babić, Case No. IT-03-72-I, Factual Statement, Case No. IT-03-72-I, para. 16 cited in Marko-Stöckl 2004: 32 [emphasis in the original], by Kuntzsch 2007: 67, footnote 112.

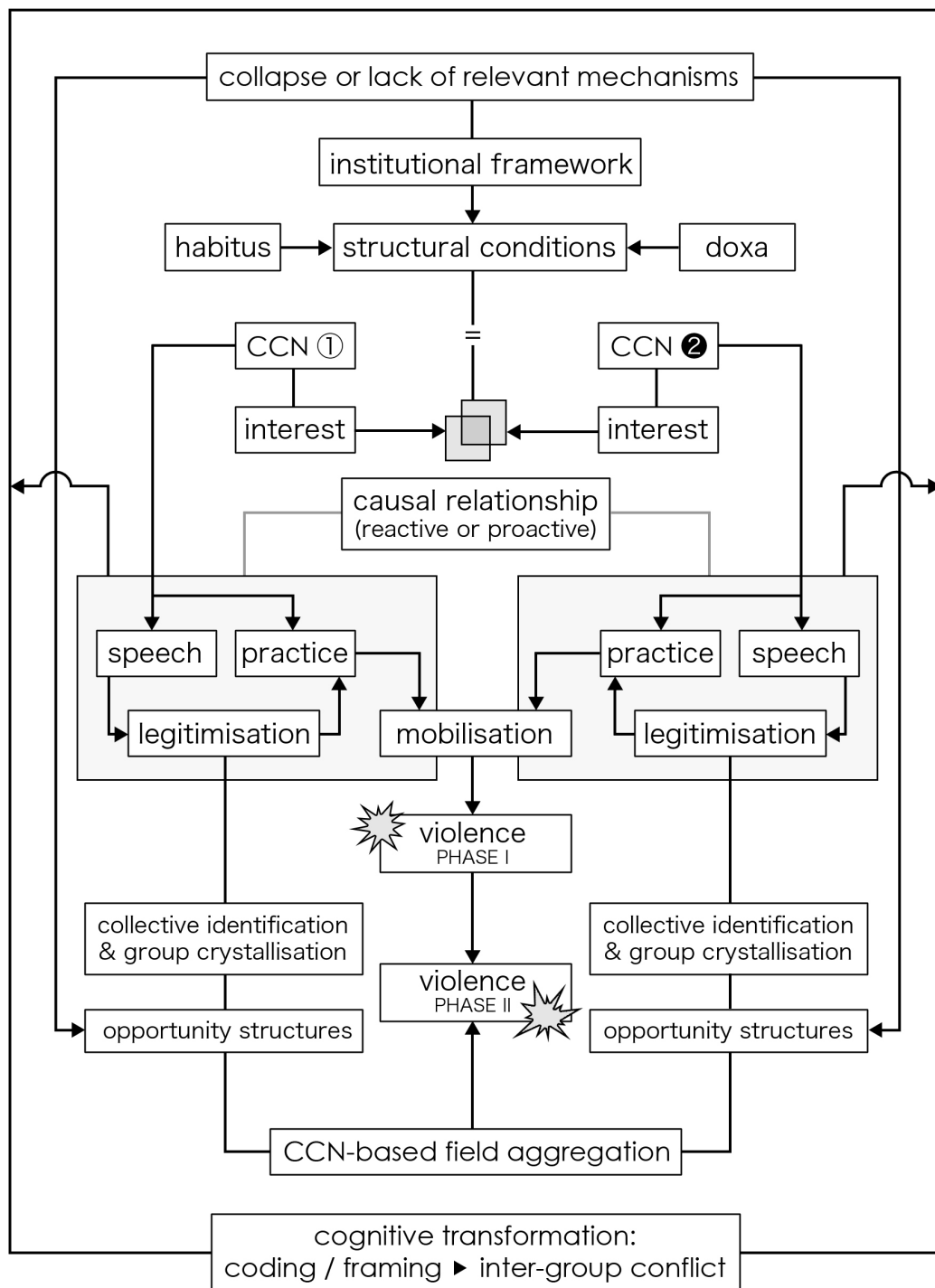


Chart 10: The dynamics of an emerging violent social conflict: From a latent interest-based conflict between Capital Cluster Nodes (CCNs) to a manifest inter-group conflict.

5.2.5. Identification and the novelty of traditions: *eramus ergo sumus*

The term “identity” is probably one of the most prominent and widely used concepts in various fields of social sciences, yet at the same time it is one of the vaguest and most intangible words bridging in this particular quality of meaninglessness the gap between ordinary language and its invasion of sciences claiming to operate accordingly to laws of rationality and logic. Although there are numerous approaches more or less clearly defining the term before continuing with a scientific analysis and even a couple of contributions exclusively dealing with the meaning and significance of “identity” as an operational variable (cf. *inter alia* Fearon & Laitin 2000b: 848-865 and Fearon: 1999), the vast bulk of scientific contributions does not bother to resort to at least the most rudimentary conceptualisation of “identity”, instead completely relying on the implicit meaning in ordinary language. An attentive reader of this paper will have noticed that in the context of the present theoretical discussions the term “identity” has been used synonymously with “label” or “collective denomination” in the sense of a cognitively constructed set of meanings with symbolically defined criteria and connotations. In any case, “identity” is a subjectively generated matrix of understanding and perception (cf. *habitus*), appearing to have an objective quality by virtue of being shared among actors and re-generated through appropriate practice. Clearly what is being suggested by the term “identity” is a product of attributing meaning to elementary dimensions of perception and its constant reproduction. This process, analogous to be called *identification*, constitutes a much more interesting aspect of analysis than the mere diagnosis of “identity”. Identification is “precisely the placing of oneself in a social category that is meaningful” (Hale 2004: 479) and a fundamental dynamic with tremendous significance on the development of violent social conflicts. The above mentioned “dimensions of perception”, in the previous chapters referred to as “building blocks” or “markers” or social differentiation, may be language, religion, descent, phenotype, etc. and could be regarded as the *variables* of the social field. Each of this variables, however, features a limited scope of possible parameter values, determined by the type of the value and the accompanying circumstances. The variable language can thus, depending on the situational and contextual frame, have the values *English*, *Mandarin*, *Kinyarwanda*, *Farsi*, *Bavarian*, etc., the same goes for the variables religion, descent, phenotype, and many more (Schlee 2004a: 137). The subjective ascription of values to a dimension of perception is nothing else but social identification. Of course, this process of “creating identities” (or reproducing them) by subjectively affiliating oneself with a category or label is not random and arbitrary, but determined by the social context and the inherent

systemic logic of plausibility (inscribed in the *habitus*) and social conventions of practice reproducing the structures of the social field. Within this bandwidth of probabilities, however, is a space for choice, decision, agency, and change - and where there is such a space, the fundamental generative principle motivating human behaviour comes into operation: interest. Russell Hardin attributes agents' identification with social groups in situations of emerging and ongoing violent social conflict to a multiplicity of motivations, basically connected to the reduction of (knowledge about) possible alternatives as well as the appearance of new opportunities - in other words: a "field aggregation" based on the structural changes caused by CCN-related dynamics (cf. chart 10 in chapter 5.2.4.). "Individuals' nationalist sentiments rise during wartime in part because the individual's fates become more closely tied to the national fate and, for many people perhaps, because wartime mobilization opens individual opportunities" (Hardin 1995a: 14 - cf. the blue and green shirts example in chapter 5.2.4.). Such a rational-choice approach to group identification has the potential to unveil the discrepancy between the *content* of social framings (i.e. primordial ethnic constituencies, "racial" differences, etc.) and the dynamic aspect of *creating* those framings. While the cognitive product of *identity* may seem primordial, natural, deterministic or objectively given, the process leading to this product, namely *identification* as a (not always absolutely conscious) consequence of a series of mutually reinforcing rational actions usually related to an interest-based conflict over specific resources (forms of capital), is not at all primordial, natural, deterministic or objectively given. In fact, it is the invention of a cognitive novelty⁵¹ presented as a historical actuality. As will be examined more closely later in this chapter, a central part of group identification is constituted by the *invention of traditions* as a mechanism creating a plausible context for eventual violent practice outwards. Identification, or - from an instrumental perspective of a group's CCN - coordination, is also a dynamic crucially linked to another fundamental principle of social cohesion, which we identified in chapter 5.1.3. as "uncertainty reduction". Joining a collectivity and integrating into a coordinated movement increases the level of available information and thus raises the level of probability of expected results for different actions (which, in turn, may be restricted or aligned by the collectivity's orientation). All these arguments illustrate the rationality of group identification as such, but what are the criteria for the identification with a *particular* group and not another?

⁵¹ Such as the "realisation" of certain European demagogues, perpetuated by everyday conversations and the context of socioeconomic exclusion as well as the reactive dynamic of non-integration, that the Western culture is superior to everything that is projected outwards and subsumed under the "Islamic world", consisting of people "living in the Middle Ages", being uneducated, having no restraints to steal and murder, being all religiously fanatic, etc.

Let us first consider examples from our everyday life. Why do people identify with a particular soccer team? As banal as it may sound, the most obvious reason is spacial concordance. Local loyalty (e.g. identification with the team representing one's own nationality) is a simple consequence of the *is-ought* dilemma, articulated by David Hume in 1739. In principle, the reasoning behind local loyalty as an acceptance of the conditions of existence is the following: "What *is* is taken to be good" (22). Of course, this concordance results from the prime fact of random spacial and temporal coexistence, yet it is being structured and cemented as cognitively reasonable rightness through the dynamics of the habitus. "The loyalist's experience of knowing her own ethnic group gives her special entrée to the pleasures of its practices and customs. From these comes the sense of comfort and well-being that seems to recommend the superiority of that group over others" (*ibid.*). Identification can be the result of simple convenience (integrating with a frame as a result of preferences based on familiarity, usually in the form of socialisation) or of shared interest (in many cases itself being the result of the first sequence of integration). "One of the most important ways information affects groups is in giving group members an understanding of their common interests. This is one half of Marx's theory of revolution", namely the "development of class consciousness" (24) as a means of group identification and subsequently interest implementation. Identification can further be boosted by the very mechanisms discussed in the previous chapter: the instigation of violence as a means of mobilisation and the coding of events in appropriate frames as a strategy of legitimisation. Here, especially violence has to be stressed as a device creating the effect, intended by the CCNs, of contributing to the construction of group identities, which in turn "serve to increase support for the elites" (Fearon & Laitin 2000b: 846). The role of violence has to be apprehended as a fundamental *condition* for the emergence of large-scale social conflict, instead of simply interpreting it as a *consequence* of pre-existing animosities. The significance of this causality becomes evident in the political development in Rwanda up to the 1990s. Structural changes such as the process of democratisation provided more freedom of movement for the opposition, at the same time, however, this freedom also opened new spaces for violence. During the genocide, many individuals "were forced to kill those whom they tried to protect", others "willingly joined the '*interahamwe*' to save their own lives" (Neubert 1999: 169). In spite of the rapid escalation of violence, however, the largest part of the population did not actively participate in the killings, as the data presented in the previous chapter clearly shows. Loyalty and identification as a result of convenience and shared interest is a foundation for the affiliation with a group, but only the instigated escalation of violence as a real threat coerces social actors aggregated around a CCN to engage in the ongoing violence themselves. As Andrea Behrends and Günther Schlee point out:

(consequential and significant) ethnic identifications only evolve in the “hot phase” of a conflict or transform in the course of a conflict as the need for changing alliances arises (cf. Behrends & Schlee 2009: 164).

Changing alliances, i.e. including further categories of actors into the in-group or excluding others as a means of effective policy implementation, naturally influences the conception of the group as such and thus the corresponding markers and labels of group identification. This process of collective identity transformation is always a gradual one, yet in some cases a “rapid change from one frame of reference to the other” (Elwert 2004: 35) takes place - this is what we called *switching*. A social movement against oppressing modes of production may switch to an ideological meta-frame, if, for instance, external support against the state-led industry can be mobilised thereby. A successful class movement institutionalised in the political system may further switch to a nationalist frame of reference in order to rally against external enemies, and/or include an ethnic or even religious interpretation of the majority population to eliminate internal opposition. Similarly, a religious movement can redefine itself and “change department” (cf. 106) to a political one, etc. Georg Elwert provides numerous empirical examples for the mechanism of switching as a device for more efficient interest implementation through group coordination or, in other words, identification:

“Sri Lanka’s Trotskyites turned their class movement into an ultra-nationalist militant organisation. In the 1990s Iraq’s secularist, nationalist Baath party redefined itself under Saddam Hussein as Islamic (...). These days the Palestinian religious movement Hamas may gain political supremacy by restating the (beforehand secular nationalist) Palestinian cause as an Islamic one” (Elwert 2004: 35).

The concept of switching implies both the movement between different frames of reference and conceptions of boundaries as well as the redefinition and alteration of given boundaries, either maintaining or reinterpreting them in accordance with the situational and contextual circumstances - whatever serves the purpose best. Just as coordination and identification are two different approaches referring to the same dynamic, simply being the perception from different points of view,⁵² so does switching have to be differentiated as either CCN-coordinated (structural) or as a manifestation of an individual agent’s attitude, choice and/or necessity. In the latter case switching or identification may be either conscious, automatic, or involuntary (e.g. the exclusion of a person due to specific markers - cf. *ibid.* 40). The mere term

⁵² The former (coordination) being the practice towards the construction of groupness as an operation of the CCN, the latter (identification) representing a peripheral individual’s demeanour towards it.

“frame of reference” suggests a relational nature: it constitutes an ideology referring to its own relative value in respect to other socially objectified constructions (other “groups” and their projected characteristics, historical events like victories, defeats, etc. and their respective interpretations, other ideologies such as religions or simply the fact of not being identified with the own framing). Practical manifestations and examples of this relational property of ideologies, being the sense-making or legitimising foundation for identification and mobilisation, are the 11th to 13th century Christian crusades (or generally the pretension of missionary activity), extremists’ interpretations of *jihād*, “Hutu power” and its consequences, Pax Americana and the “Project for the New American Century”,⁵³ ethnic discrimination of Serbian minorities in the newly founded yet not universally recognised Republic of Kosovo, and so on. One should not forget that all of these narratives always have to be understood in their linkage to power relations and the respective interests in a social field. Ideology, or the interpretational context providing *intuitive plausibility* for normative claims and their overlay onto political actions, is a prerequisite for sustainable group identification. The main ingredients of such beliefs or ideologies may be the historical interpretations of events and facts, but empirical cases show that the work of interpretation is basically the creation of something new that is claimed to be old. Ideology “selects (...) whatever it needs (...) and projects its own products back into history”. Narratives and identity labels created in such a fashion “may be dreamt up but are difficult to dream away again” (Schlee 2004: 9). While elites or CCN as well as indoctrinated social agents “themselves rather insist on the eternality and stability of their group” (Elwert 1995: 105), in most cases the decisive characteristics of the perceived *status quo* of such a group are highly flexible and changing over time. In fact, overlapping affiliations, alliances, connections and mechanisms of social organisation, wars, migration, political, technological, and economic development, all contribute to the development of coordination and identification that make the retrospective self-evidence and continuity of a group to nothing more than an illusion, nevertheless with a high potential of practical consequentiality. The projection of ideological value back in time follows a logic I tend to call *eramus ergo sumus* - “we have been, therefore we are” - yet not requiring the objective truth of such a statement in order to activate its functional potential as a device for policy implementation. The historical sequence of identification can be depicted as a tree diagram (or an interlinking of such): At various points in time there is a possibility of *choice*,

⁵³ The *Project for the New American Century* (PNAC) was a US-American think tank founded in 1997 promoting “American world leadership”. Its highly controversial attitude towards global military dominance of the United States was primarily reflected in its September 2000 report titled “Rebuilding America’s Defenses. Strategy, Forces and Resources For a New Century”, allegedly co-developed by Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz and Lewis Libby. For further details cf. <http://www.newamericancentury.org> | 10.05.2010.

both in the structural perspective of coordination as well as the individual decision of affiliation with a group integrating a specific marker into the subjective sentiment of self-identity. Depending on the context, a CCN as well as peripheral agents might choose to focus on different cognitive dimensions (such as language, income or shirt colour) and coordinate their integration / exclusion or identify with the ascribed values, advancing the historical sequence by transforming the present *status quo* or switching to other frames. Choice, however, has to be understood in terms of probability restricted by a number of constraints, such as institutional limits, coercion, habitus, etc. - all discussed in the previous chapters (cf. also Sen 2007 and also Epstein 1978). Choice or switching thus cannot be random and arbitrary but with reference to existing “symbolic inventories” (Elwert 2004: 43), whose structure of relevance may then be altered respectively. In order to activate specific elements of an existing frame of reference (such as the relevance of an alleged genetically inherited ethnicity in relation to the negative social influence of individuals labelled by that very ethnicity) and adapt them as implicitly plausible ideologies capable of legitimisation, CCNs have to establish new patterns for fears and hopes in relation to the socially “other”, create innovations that are subsequently “presented as traditions” (113). More often than not the mere creation of a space of fear and hopes, however, is not enough to mobilise peripheral agents for desired purposes. The case of Yugoslavia clearly illustrates how historical memories have been instrumentalised in nationalistic propaganda, conditioning the cognitive concordance between social agents and the political practice of CCNs. Also, more recent memories concerning the “Yugoslav identity” so fiercely aspired by Josip Broz Tito had to be erased in order to pave the way for the implementation of a multiplicity of interests pursued by newly empowered elites after the dissolution of the SFRY. But where indoctrination failed to produce its effects, “people were forced, sometimes at gunpoint, to chose who they ‘really’ were. (...) It took hard work by unscrupulous politicians to convince ordinary people” (Bowen 1996: 9). The potential of claimed traditions or historical reference selectively stressing certain markers relevant for a desired identification lies in the fact that it offers a space of perceived stability and continuity especially in situations of social instability, upheaval, crisis or transformation. Ironically, most historical references constituting the emotional basis for group-identifications⁵⁴ are themselves nothing but periods of social instability, upheaval, crisis

⁵⁴ Referred to by Vamik Volkan as “chosen glories” (such as the Red Army’s victory of the “Great Patriotic War” of 1941-1945, characterised by a complete denial of the first years of the Second World War and the Hitler-Stalin pact in respect to the Russian national identity) and “chosen traumas” (such as the *Shoah* or the *Holocaust* and its cognitive relation to Biblical myths of the Exodus constituting a fundamental element of modern Jewish self-identification), cf. Volkan 1999: 142-206. Jack Eller observes that this interpretation of history “may be a past of glory and honor or of humiliation and dishonor, or a combination of both, since either can function as a means to define and motivate a group” (Eller 1999: 31).

or transformation, and crucial to the most significant changes of group identity. It follows logically that in those instances where group stability and continuity is rhetorically emphasised most by historical reference, the essence or content of these ideological markers for identification is most dramatically subjected to change. The power of collective narratives is reciprocally proportional to social stability - in prospering societies characterised by welfare, stability, transparency and economic opportunities with a social cohesion based on rationality and functional efficiency the impact of ideology and propaganda is very limited, while in situations of high social, political and economic uncertainty such framings can provide an appealing substitute, whether their content is true or not - it suffices to be strong and convincing, emotionally plausible for the justification of a current policy or action.

In such circumstances categories of group differentiation rapidly become interwoven with power-related dynamics such as hierarchy, stratification and the pursuit of interests by different actors embedded in the disturbed social field. The lack of transparency, objective information flow and severe structural constraints impeding the possibility of choice contribute to the tightening of categories, being the cognitive products of framing and coding dynamics, as *faits sociaux* in a Durkheimian sense, “ increasingly taking on a life of their own, from which it may be extremely difficult for the individual to escape” (Epstein 1978: 109). Jack Eller notices that objective history “is not as important as subjective history - subjective, that is, as remembered by the groups in conflict” (Eller 1999: 40). Since “groups” are not actively aware and conscious social actors, but merely the cognitive interpretation, categorisation and simplification of an otherwise very dynamic, complex and interwoven reality, the following question arises: *Who* is the one remembering (and articulating) a groups’ history? An originally Latin proverb states that “history is written by the victors”, or - as in the famous quotation attributed to Winston Churchill: “History will be kind to me. For I intend to write it.”⁵⁵ The lessons learned from our past suggest that, indeed, those social actors possessing the highest concentration of symbolic capital, including public recognition (in our globalised, transnational world this also implies the increasing role of mass media), are central in the definition of groupness and group history due to their interpretational capacity or *Deutungsmacht*. The so constructed “remembering” or memory of an allegedly common history as nostalgia is hence intrinsically bound to the circumstances of existence reflected in the social field and the embedded interests of Capital Cluster Nodes. Invoking a link between

⁵⁵ Churchill’s original statement, quoted in a speech delivered in the House of Commons on 23 January 1948 was: “For my part, I consider that it will be found much better by all Parties to leave the past to history, especially as I propose to write that history.” Cited in: Shapiro [ed.] (2006) *The Yale Book of Quotations*. Yale: Yale University Press, p. 154.

the past and the present projects a specific path towards the future, legitimising any action that contributes to the establishing of such an intuitively necessary future. Since it follows from the above that *identification* is directly related to *hierarchisation* or the crystallisation of power relations, one must bear in mind the significance of *meaning* ascribed to social categories (identities) not only as a fundamental mirror for the interest-based relations among various CCNs in the social field (and hence the mechanisms underlying a conflict far beneath the surface of rhetorical argumentation usually conflated and confused with the conflict itself), but also as a potential device for unveiling the illegitimate and deceptive policies of conflict-interested actors and hence opening new channels for possible conflict transformation.

5.2.6. Mechanisms of group crystallisation and the snowball effect

In the previous chapter we distinguished between “identity” as a virtual label or cognitive category and “identification” as a causal dynamic based on interests, motivations, practice and various constraints. While the latter might be understood as a subjective process, the former appears to an observer as an objectivity defined by proclaimed criteria of membership. Yet a closer look at the reality of group criteria in relation to its presence or absence in individual social agents associated with the group unveils a striking discrepancy: Generalising ascriptions rely on characteristics of membership not objectively definable nor equally shared among the members. What indeed seems relevant for the identification with a social group is not the concordance of some putative characteristics or criteria, but the factor of *motivation* being at the heart of the dynamic. The presence of “collective identity” always entails an asymmetrically shared motivation of agents linked in a Capital Cluster by virtue of their interest. Russell Hardin vividly illustrates the significance of “objective” identity and the respectively defined markers or characteristics in relation to social practice:

“I have so little commitment to my putative ethnic identities that I know anything about some of them only from casual hearsay, and I may have got some of them wrong. Many Serbs must share my lack of ethnic identification; many others are willing to kill for theirs. Objective identity tells almost none of the story - indeed, it may only tell the victim’s story, as many groups [*in fact: individuals, not groups!, note*] have suffered

horrendous abuse because they were objectively identified as worthy of suppression or extinction” (Hardin 1995a: 8).

Out of the interplay of *motivations* further arise three basic constituencies defining the presence and absence of a somehow objectified, yet subjectively recognised “identity” - in whatever variation it may emerge, depending on the situational and contextual circumstances and structures of relevance - be it in the form of ethnicity, religious community, nation, or virtually any other kind of groupness. The three elements available depending on the motivations, are: self-perception, other perception and participation or practice contributing to the crystallisation of groupness. Moreover, the eight possible combinations of these three basic elements also define the type of groupness (e.g. ethnicity), which in any case is always “based more on its consciousness, or ‘awareness,’ of difference and shared traits and past than on the objective quality of those traits” (Eller 1999: 13). The cognitive nature of groupness in the sense of Anderson’s “imagined communities” (cf. Anderson 2006), interestingly, is nothing more than an extension or projection of what is being perceived as individual identity onto others.

type of ethnicity ↓	self-perception	other perception	participation
full	✓	✓	✓
unrecognized		✓	✓
private	✓		✓
symbolic	✓	✓	
hidden			✓
stereotyped		✓	
imagined	✓		
nonethnic			

Chart 11: Eight types of ethnicity.⁵⁶

Indeed, analogous to the idea of a “nation” it has to be noted that the conception of my “self” with all the seemingly self-evident, comforting and plausible markers and characteristics is merely an imagination created as a product out of the history and interplay of the habitus and

⁵⁶ The chart is based on the variables defined by Yinger, Milton (1994) *Ethnicity: Source of Strength? Source of Conflict?* Albany: State University of New York Press, p. 4, cited in Eller (1999), pp. 11-12.

the external structures and agents embedded in the field, my dispositions and social positions, my internalised subjectivity and projected objectivity. Just as this socially developed and constructed “self” is not equivalent with my body, brain and the neuronal connections and configurations it contains, but rather a projection of the mind, a “reality within” merely reflecting the meanings attached to the (cognitively absolutely inaccessible) “reality without” - so is a framing, an interpretation or a *category* of social differentiation not equivalent to a *group*. Rogers Brubaker hence suggests to analyse the process through which categories become “embedded in culturally powerful and symbolically resonant myths, memories, and narratives”. A focus on categories as cognitive frames “can help us envision ethnicity without groups” (Brubaker 2004: 13), that is the potential of identities as labels constructed as a product of actor-based dynamics (which under specific circumstances can lead to the eruption of social violence), completely without having to rely on the ideological interpretations and codings as presupposed variables of analysis.

So groups crystallise as objectifications of cognitive schemes embedded in the habitus. Similarly, the origins of ethnicity as a plausible principle structuring human societies all over the globe can be traced back to the colonial practice of implicitly assuming such groups to be objects in time and space, wherever the waves of imperialism brought the European explorers and conquerors. In many, if not most cases, “often for administrative purpose, but also out of genuine conviction, groups were taken to be real, exclusive, and well bounded - that is, to be self-contained societies. Further, they were often taken to be ahistorical, culturally static or stable - that is, primitive or traditional societies. (...) In many instances racial categories were superimposed upon existing social differences, reifying those differences while often suggesting a closer racial relationship of one group than the other to the white colonizers. The very idea of race was (and to an extent is) a European or Western preoccupation” (Eller 1999: 33). The very emergence of modern democracy, flanked by industrialisation and expansion of mass media, intensively contributed to the consolidation of such groups. Since democracy is based on representation, the most efficient way to implement representation was to cluster civic interests into communal categories, then associated with other cognitive dimensions such as linguistic or religious communality, subsequently “reified, institutionalized, and politicized in unprecedented ways to ensure groups a share of the power *as groups*” (35), often reflected in voting blocks that violently turned against each other against the background of a political stalemate or blockade, hindering elites in their strife for power. Ironically (or, in consequence, probably tragically), the since not much earlier than 1789 increasing self-evidence of groups or large-scale collectivities as *Völker* (be it nationally, ethnically or politically defined) led to the tremendous proliferation of what has later been

articulated as the Wilsonian idea of self-determination in the first decades of the twentieth century. The obsession with every individual human being on the planet naturally belonging to a *Volk*, manifested in various national “awakenings” and (re)discoveries of the own ancient histories, allowed political elites all around the globe to consolidate the nation as a fundamental category of difference, creating structures for hierarchisation, coordination, optimisation, governance and hence power and capital accumulation. The development of nation states and “nationality” as well as its codification in International Law can easily be regarded as the largest group-making project in human history. Still, it followed more or less the same mechanisms of group crystallisation that are being dealt with in this paper, discernible in various social contexts, especially those of emerging violent social conflicts - all “aimed at transforming categories into groups or increasing levels of groupness” (Brubaker 2004: 13, with reference to Bourdieu). An example of how such a crystallisation project develops a snowball effect when fuelled by instigated violence is given by the following illustration:

“When the small, ill-equipped, ragtag Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) stepped up its attacks on Serb policemen and other targets in early 1998, for example, this was done as a deliberate - and successful - strategy of provoking massive regime reprisals. As in many such situations, the brunt of the reprisals was borne by civilians. The cycle of attacks and counterattacks sharply increased groupness among both Kosovo Albanians and Kosovo Serbs, generated greater support for the KLA among both Kosovo and diaspora Albanians, and bolstered KLA recruitment and funding. This enabled the KLA to mount a more serious challenge to the regime, which in turn generated more brutal regime reprisals, and so on. In this sense, group crystallization and polarization were the result of violence, not the cause (...). The same can be said, *mutatis mutandis*, about the dynamics of the second intifada in Israel and the occupied territories” (Brubaker 2004: 13-14).

What is so readily picked up by mass media as “ethnic violence” erupting after years, decades or centuries of doze (cf. *inter alia* the newest riots in Kyrgyzstan in mid-June 2010), is usually nothing more than the effect of simplifying, coding and labelling CCN-based conflicts of interest perpetuated into mass violence by specific dynamics facilitating the snowball effect required for successful mobilisation and legitimisation. As has already been pointed out several times, the symbolic overlay of meaning onto the perception of a social reality or conflict carries a moral and affective potential and hence the force enabling efficient

coordination, once it is being embedded and operates “within a coherent field of domination” (Bentley 1987: 43), i.e. within a field of *doxa* that synchronises practice and the respective cognitive understanding of practice between leaders and followers. This maintenance and adaptation of *doxa* through coordination of *habitus*, being nothing more than symbolic domination, “requires sufficient integration of preconscious assumptions about the world to maintain a functional complementarity of perception and motivation” (44). There is a specific feedback loop between the configuration of power relations within a field, structuring the social environment and creating spheres of interaction that channel practice along paths and boundaries, and the instrumental construction of ethnicity (one might call “political ethnicity”). Actor-based spheres of interaction related to the existing power relations draw invisible cleavages, contributing to a rational and efficient choice of personal identification. Out of this the perception of shared interests in respect to various forms of capital arises, a CCN crystallises and conceals its novelty as a political interest cluster by invoking “ethnic” labels as an interpretation of the personal proximity of interest among “group members”. This label as a simple, intuitively plausible and easily reproducible explanation of “what is going on” feeds back on the integration of the cluster and consolidation of the elite’s executive potential, especially through the absorption of modern, international mass media (being much more interested in its own profits than the probably not so sensational accuracy of news coverage). Once a CCN recognises that the use of large-scale violence is a much more efficient way of interest implementation than the alternative provided (or not provided) by institutional means of peaceful conflict resolution, several self-reinforcing mechanisms of group crystallisation are available to get the ball rolling. The most fundamental one is the principle of *inclusion* and *exclusion*, being at the core of each and every emerging violent social conflict.

The creation of insider/outsider antagonisms can run along both dimensions of practice (cf. chart 10): speech or rhetoric strategies as discursive devices on the one hand and mobilisation and political or military (apparent or covert) actions contributing to mobilisation on the other hand. Rhetoric frames focussing on the process of inclusion and exclusion necessary for group consolidation and demarcation of the enemy, highlight the significance of differences from the “others” while minimising internal differences within the cluster designed to be potentially relevant for the CCN’s interest implementation. Those frames operate “by highlighting certain features of social reality while blurring others, by proposing one particular set of political objectives and not others. In each case, the strategy of framing particular values or ethnic differences with socioeconomic interests and political objectives” (Máiz 2003: 200) is being distorted by emphasising the former and disguising the

latter. What are the criteria for *how* inclusion and exclusion takes place, i.e. what aspects define the boundaries of a group? As has already been argued in the previous chapters, (rhetorical) strategies aimed at collective identification relate directly to the reasoning of efficiency, being in Bourdieu's wider understanding of the term clearly *economic* considerations. In- and exclusion define not only the group size but also the average group capital and hence strength potentially at disposal. Similarly to what has been identified as *switching* by Georg Elwert, rhetoric framings can influence the adoption of narrower or wider categories of identity within the same dimension (such as phenotype, language, or religion, defined by their conceptual distance to the 0-point of the CCN, i.e. an American having an African grandmother can still be included in the category of "black", while excluded from membership in the KKK; a Protestant might be a "Christian" brother while in other circumstances a non-Catholic and hence enemy), or the inclusion of (switch to) another dimension (cf. Schlee 2004a: 137). The fundamental motivation for the definition of narrower or wider categories of identification is always an interest-based cost-benefit calculation for both the CCNs or decision-makers constructing the frame and peripheral actors choosing to identify or not with a framing reflected in their attitude to the CCNs' decisions, in intensified cases characterised by high social uncertainty and lacking information enhanced by affective indoctrination. Those "strategies of inclusion and exclusion are not carried out by groups in isolation but rather in interaction with the corresponding strategies of their neighbours. Thus, the appropriate unit of reference (...) is not the ethnic group or tribe, but rather the region" (142), or - as has been argued in chapter 5.2.5. - local proximity. Perceived identity and difference, therefore, is not the product of the presence or absence of certain criteria or markers, but results from the processes of political rhetorics and its structural consolidation in a social field defined by specific power relations and interests.

Another mechanism of group crystallisation, linked to the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, is what can be called *purification*. Just as Sigmund Freud defined identification with another person as a process of adopting that person (or at least the cognitive projection how this person is perceived) as a role model or ideal type of reference, so is purification to be understood in reference to the quintessentially "ideal" norm of a certain concept (cf. Hitler and the ideal Aryan in chapter 5.2.3.). Similarly an "increasingly strict and narrow definition of who is a true Muslim or a true Christian is used to determine which social groups should be excluded from power, simply by insinuating that they do not exhibit doctrinal purity" (Schlee 2007: 41). Correspondence with the ideal norm thus becomes a kind of "job description" for anyone who want and is allowed to participate in the in-group. It can rhetorically be easily adapted and linked to other norms, forcing unwanted individuals out of the group or enabling

the CCNs to create new alliances. Within a national context the “purification” of a putative national culture can be a powerful argument of political entrepreneurs wishing to seize power in the intra-group struggles, at the same time being very resistant to rhetorical objections (which politician, interested in the accumulation of votes among citizens of a nation, would easily admit that language or the country’s tradition are not important values?). Purification aims at a restrictive definition of membership, related to both the creation of an optimal in-group executive potential as well as a required outer group. Under the pressure of slavery many Africans became nominal Muslims, which in the 19th century forced the slave hunters to define even more restrictive religious elaborations, introducing increasingly higher demands for a true Muslim lifestyle, which in turn allowed them to maintain a category nonbelievers available for enslavement (cf. Schlee 2000b: 11). If an Austrian asks a person with a clear Indian phenotype “Where are you from?”, the answer that he or she is from Vienna, will rarely be satisfactory, even if his or hers ancestors immigrated into the country a century ago, totally integrating into the society. A nationalist rhetorics of purification based on apparent visual differences will clearly affect this person irrespectively of his or hers attitude towards the nationalistic idea. The equivalent of purification as a mechanisms aimed at self-glorification and ideological exaltation of the own criteria strategically defined for group crystallisation is the externalisation or projection of threats outwards, beyond the proclaimed boundaries of the in-group. A problem that might be the result of the structural situation of the own social system and/or the underlying interests of the CCN, can be projected onto a minority or external cluster of actors, on the one hand relieving the one affiliated with the own cluster from the burden of responsibility, on the other hand enforcing their solidarity as a reactive mechanism to the perceived external threat. The “shared identity of the Hutu in Burundi emerged only recently with the Tutsi repressions of 1972 (Lake & Rothchild 1996: 56), similarly was the case in Yugoslavia, Chechnya, the “war against terror”, etc. A feeling of solidarity or unifying effects resulting from rhetorical engineering can further be consolidated by what Elwert calls “moral economy” or “practical solidarity” (Elwert 2004: 47) - i.e. the implementation of policies aimed at the stabilisation of group coherence, constituting a “generalised reciprocity or redistribution” (*ibid.*) manifested in pension or welfare programs, exclusive education or taxation systems, etc.

All those mechanisms facilitate group crystallisation, yet by themselves they do not produce large-scale violence. It follows from our analysis in the previous chapters that instigated violence in terms of practice enforcing the plausibility and affective potential of rhetoric legitimisations in the course of an emerging conflict then translates into the second stage of violence characterised by its persistency and massive deployment, often manifested in

massacres or attempts of ethnic cleansing. Large-scale violence, being itself just another form of policy implementation with the side effect of massive loss in human lives, however, should not be wrongly interpreted as collective violence, reifying the image of homogenous groups as unified singular entities being in a clash against each other. In the following chapter a closer look shall be taken on the “reality on the ground”, highlighting the processes of a large-scale violent social conflict beneath the apparent and beyond the perceived.

5.2.7. Collective violence? On markets of violence and opportunity structures

When a state apparatus is intact, social certainty available, the welfare system more or less efficiently operating within an acceptable economic environment, then instances of violence are usually attributed to criminal behaviour. Interestingly, as soon as the above mentioned conditions disappear, violence is no longer criminal but the result of riots, uprisings, clashes or a civil war - all depicted as “ethnic”, “religious”, “tribal”, and so on. Why and how does the perception and interpretation of the same thing change so dramatically as soon as the structural conditions for functional statehood dissolve? The answer seems simple: A fundamental constituency of a state is not only the monopoly of violence, but also the monopoly of interpretation (the capacity to code and define internal processes, *Deutungsmacht*). The term *criminal* is relational in respect to the judiciary structures of a state and implies appropriate legislatively codified sanctions, executed by the state monopoly. Once these structures, however, are no longer capable of sanctioning, violence can consequently no longer be defined as criminal - it becomes a free form of action conditioned only by the limits of its efficiency (i.e. benefits - “can I achieve something I want faster and better than without violence?”) and the expenses or costs of its implementation (moral considerations, risks, punishments, etc.). As soon as violence is no longer criminal, it becomes a potential means of implementing strategies, policies and interests. Actors possessing enough material and symbolic capital enabling them to channel violence (thus defining them as CCNs), engage in strategic considerations in which the use of violence is a possible, yet risky option. Strategic violence (cf. Elwert 1999: 9, 20) is linked to a high risk factor because it narrows the probability of other options in a causal chain of interaction, bearing in mind the absence of sanctioning mechanisms. Strategic or instigated violence is characteristic for what has been defined in chapter 5.2.4. as *Phase-I violence*, i.e. the instrumentalisation of what would normally be “criminal” violence (release and reward of prisoners, instrumentalisation of

street gangs and hooligans, armament of extremists and civilians, formation of paramilitary units, etc.), rapidly advancing all efforts of group crystallisation (e.g. inclusion / exclusion) and driven by calculated economic interests in a broader sense. Günther Schlee suggests to supplement any “purely economic explanation” for emerging violent conflicts by a “theory of social identification” (Schlee 2007: 40) - in the model presented in this paper the underlying broader understanding of economy as originally contemplated by Bourdieu (appreciating the role of symbolic capital and practice operating within the *habitus*) more or less automatically leads to the realisation of mechanisms of social identification accompanying the emergence of social violence. Identification, however, should never be regarded merely as a cause of violence, but always as a method of its implementation and in most cases even a *consequence of violence*. “It is fear and hate generated from the top, and not ethnic differences, that finally push people to commit acts of violence” (Bowen 1996: 8), provided, one has to add, only in a social context enabling violence to be efficient and reasonable for certain actors. Propaganda spreading through radio broadcasts, generous promises such as the acquisition of land and material wealth, enforcement and threat contribute to the probability of violence, yet large-scale violence (as a situation aspired by CCNs to overlay the image of collective violence and hence the internal legitimation to get rid of “the other group”) also requires the flexibility of elites to open spaces for peripheral agents to settle personal scores, satisfy greed and act preemptively in the created fear of retaliation. Also the creation of a homogenous “group”, or at least of a collectivity of different agents who can be ascribed to the specific group by virtue of emphasising particular criteria or markers, provides the node situated at the centre of the consolidated and reified cluster with a significant form of power based on symbolic, social and cultural capital: coordination power. In contrast to material power (based on economic capital and objectified forms of other capital), usually reflected in the control over resources, arms and money, coordination power allows a cluster of many people linked together by their relation to the proclaimed *and* disguised interests concentrated at the node to sustain in critical situations, often lacking a sufficient amount of material power (cf. Hardin 1995a: 20). Disguised interests are usually the root cause of dynamics leading to the emergence of violent social conflicts, they are the political or economic, in any case power-related *primary* interests of influential social agents, which would be illegitimate and not acceptable in the context of a functioning and inclusive political system. On the other hand, proclaimed interests are those channels linking all actors to the node not sharing the central interests at hand - we could call them *secondary* or mobilising interests. In other words: If my interest is to organise a coup, because the current political system does not provide any realistic possibilities for me to come into power, there will be an inner cluster of people sharing my *primary* interest due to their

own expected profits. However, I will need to mobilise a larger collectivity supporting my claims in order to have a back up in the population and legitimise my authority after a successful coup. If I happen to wear a green shirt, as the majority of the population does, I will frame my claims in terms of the majority's will, disguising my own interest in expected profits. Similarly, if I am being part of the minority of blue shirts, I will define my fight as a struggle against the long-lasting oppression of blue shirts and strife for equal rights, maybe also stressing the superiority of blue shirts for any random reason. But most of the people do not wear their green or blue shirts every day, some of them are not even aware they have one somewhere in their wardrobe - they are simply not interested in this superficial commonality, having better things to do in their personal lives. At this point *secondary* interest comes into play: I start selling blue or green shirts for an incredibly cheap price, promising all potential buyers to satisfy their personal and subjectively important interests if they wear the cheap shirt on Sunday, drink some free beer I will be distributing and support my coup.

Collective violence is nothing else than the external perception of a *coordinated divergence of interests*, channeled and implemented by violence as a means made reasonable, plausible, or at least necessary (as the only alternative) for a minority of social agents actively involved in violence and a majority directly affected by it. Accepting the premise that human behaviour is motivated by interest, it follows that the fundamental plurality and divergence of interests present in any given society does not simply dissolve into nothing or aggregate into two or more antagonistic blocks, but rather continues to exist under different social circumstances, including violent conflict and political instability. Postulating ethnic tensions or differences dividing whole populations into hostile blocks as the cause of violence completely disregards the fact that the vast majority of cases where such alleged differences are discernible "do not lead to sustained intergroup violence" (Fearon & Laitin 1996: 717), but against all apparent odds remain cooperative and peaceful. The decisive matrix is to be identified in the structures of social order, ideally providing an institutional framework covering the whole scope for individual opportunism and reasonable interest fulfilment. In the modern era the obvious solution for coordinating this complexity of interactions and transactions is provided by the structures of the state, the *leviathan* so to speak. Similarly, the coordination of a violent social conflict can be regarded as yet another way of providing a framework of "social order", although the term might not reflect the first impression of a large-scale conflict. Coordination of groups implies the awareness of the divergence of interests and heterogeneity of motives not only horizontally distributed among all social agents, but also the vertical divergence between leaders or CCNs and their putative followers or constituents. Such an awareness by

the central actors facilitates successful mobilisation, which in turn blurs the respective awareness by external observers, who in their analysis usually fail to go one step further and look beyond the ideological framings overlaid on the underlying heterogeneity. But how do CCNs incorporate such a heterogeneity of interests and motives into their agendas and activate the resulting potential of collective mobilisation and instrumentalisation?

Analogous to an institutionalised social order of a functioning state apparatus, in a conflict situation Capital Cluster Nodes engage in the deliberate creation of *opportunity structures* enabling various actors potentially relevant for the CCN's interest implementation to pursue their own goals and agendas that can retrospectively all be framed by the meta-narrative of collective violence. Gangs, small bands, and paramilitary groups are being empowered, driven by the new opportunities to achieve their goals, preexisting local rivalries reemerge and reinforce the spiral of violence. This should, however, not give the impression of total anarchy where every singular individual is at his or her neighbour's throat, on the contrary - evidence suggests that even in a large-scale violent conflicts most people show more bewilderment and confusion leading to fear than hatred and readiness for violence. While a minority of individuals aggregating around the Capital Cluster "begin to pursue their selfish goals amidst the chaos" (Kuntzsch 2007: 65), creating enough damage to make it look like a total war with everyone involved, the majority of the population seek shelter and refuge from the fighting, often not being able to remain unaffected despite their lack of personal interest in the conflict. Impunity, so it seems, is itself not enough for most actors to opt for violence as a convenient means of interest implementation. As has already been exemplified on the case of the Rwandan genocide, extremist leaders "delivered food, drink, and other intoxicants, parts of military uniforms and small payments in cash to hungry, jobless young men" (Des Forges, Alison L. (1999) *Leave None to Tell the Story*. New York: Human Rights Watch, p. 120, cited in Kuntzsch 2007: 77) in order to stir them into action. While the incentives for engaging in violence might be quite low for some people (food, alcohol, employment), others in turn require further variables in their personal cost-benefit considerations. One of such crucial variables is *integration* - pragmatic benefits resulting from belonging to a group can outweigh the apparent personal costs of affiliating oneself with the group, especially in situations of external coercion and threat. In any case, it is to be analysed on the individual level of interaction how and under which circumstances people "come to follow extremist leaders although they prefer inter-ethnic cooperation" (*ibid.*: 9). In situations where civilians and individuals seemingly uninvolved in the power struggles of elites exhibit a readiness for destructive behaviour and ridiculously high personal risks and harms just to contributed to some putative or real group benefits, there usually is another layer of cost-benefit

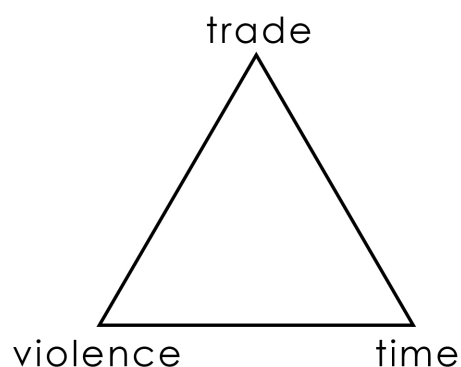
considerations to be found underneath the perceived collective affiliation. Indeed, for people essentially dependent on their integration in a social system, it may often “become virtually impossible to stay in the community without joining in the violence” (Hardin 1995a: 23). But how does such a complexity of individual interactions, motives and practices become perceived as collective violence? Why do individual motives and local agendas only rarely surface in media coverages, reports and conflict analysis? The answer might be found in a combination of reductionism and deductive reasoning: When a society in conflict is observed, the simplest explanation is the one most readily available and plausible for a broader international public, not so much interested in a comprehensive understanding of the situation as in being fed with spectacular and emotionally entertaining news. Also, the depiction of a remote conflict as being in a state of “collective” violence ironically allows any given external observer to intuitively relate oneself to the situation, simply by creating a negative reference to “them”. The people X in Republic Faraway fight against the people Y, and we do not - simply because we are not X nor Y, therefore we are entitled to have a moral opinion on them. Unveiling the complexity of diverging interests would resemble to deconstruct competing soccer teams, highlighting the financial motivations of individual players instead of the team spirit - the championship would lose its allure and entertaining capacity. Further, the tendency to perceive social violence as “collective” results from the failure “to distinguish individual motives from collective results” (Bentley 1978: 48), a cognitive dilemma that is clearly overcome by the theory of practice, not conflating “the systemic consequences of collective action with individuals’ intentions” (*ibid.*). The relation between elite frames of identity, policies, actions and local, individual or peripheral practice, reflected in government support of paramilitary associations (such as the *janjaweed* in the Darfur region) or civilians enlisting in military units to “fight for the cause” while pursuing their local feuds and grudges, produce a transition to what we identified as *Phase-II violence*, i.e. a full-blown conflict or civil war completely and effectively framed by the CCNs’ interpretational doctrines. This transition also allows violence erupting along local cleavages now to be coded in terms of “justified violence”, while in a context of intact rule of law it would simply be criminal. In fact, absorption of postulated group identities often remains the only way to justify practice - ethnicity thus becomes the new *doxa*, or at least the dominant orthodoxy. In the words of Charles King: “In times of social upheaval, the ability to wrap one’s own ambitions in the mantle of justified violence may be the only thing that separates perpetrators from victims” (King 2004: 431) - or, paraphrasing a prominent self-declared

leader of the Free World: “Either you’re with us, or you’re against us”.⁵⁷ The relationship between local or private disputes and the conflict of interest underlying the master cleavage is a mutually reinforcing one: Peripheral actors take advantage of the collective framing defining the main war while CCNs can easily instrumentalise the potential of violent behaviour in their strife for power. One of many available examples is given by Sathis Kalyvas in his analysis of centre-periphery interaction (cf. chapter 5.2.3.): “The mass killings that took place in Indonesia in 1965–1966 were ostensibly articulated around the communism/anticommunism cleavage, yet a sustained examination of regional massacres unearthed all kinds of local conflicts” (Kalyvas 2003: 478). The mutual influence between central and peripheral interests also reveals the fact that social violence is not always instrumental for the CCN’s aspirations only, in fact many local actors not directly related to the central conflict issues at hand “succeed in getting central actors to direct their violence against private enemies by describing them in the idiom of the master cleavage” (484), a dynamic that instantly reminds one of the vibrant construction of an international “terrorist threat” and its implications in the recent years. In many cases the only problem with such an analytical perspective is its empirical verification, since both credible and comprehensive information from the ground as well as systematic studies of the illustrated dynamics are missing. Countless accounts of victims and eyewitnesses (among them individuals who survived the Rwandan genocide in 1994 interviewed by me), however, seem to confirm that beneath the central framing of collective inter-group conflicts spaces open to violence and subsequently “markets of violence” (cf. Elwert 1999) emerge, enabling a multitude of actors to implement their interests stimulated by a whole bandwidth of motives, ranging from the most ideological to the most opportunistic ones.

While pure ideological motivation combined with a mental inability to critically reflect one’s own behaviour may produce strong outcomes easily exploitable by strategic actors, it still remains a rather rare cause of violence in civil wars and conflicts. The overwhelming majority of violent practice is “based on rational i. e. comprehensible economic behaviour. Emotions, such as hate and fear, are instrumentalised in this context” (Elwert 1999: 85). Also, there is no

⁵⁷ The exact wording used by George W. Bush in an address to a joint session of Congress on 20 September 2001 was: “Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists” (<http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html> | 15.05.2010). A similar phrasing of this antagonistic polarisation is being ascribed to Jesus Christ: “He who is not with me is against me...” (Luke 11:23 and Matthew 12:30 in <http://www.biblegateway.com> | 15.05.2010), Vladimir Ilyich Lenin: “[E]ach man must choose between joining our side or the other side. Any attempt to avoid taking sides in this issue must end in fiasco” (speech delivered on 3 November 1920, cf. Lenin (1965) *Collected Works*. 4th English Edition, Volume 31. Moscow: Progress Publishers, pp. 340-361), Benito Mussolini: “O con noi o contro di noi” (numerous speeches) or the fictional Anakin Skywalker (the later Darth Vader) in *Star Wars III*: “If you’re not with me, then you’re my enemy” (Lucas, George (2005) *Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith*. Lucasfilm, 20th Century Fox).

clear-cut line between allegedly ideological and seemingly economic motivation, since the factor of legitimisation contributes to its mutual reinforcement. As violence can under such circumstances no longer be criminally sanctioned, it becomes - analogous to trade and manpower in peaceful times - a means of production, achievement and access to resources and commodities. The dissolution of the state monopoly (both of violence and interpretational capacity) and the successful use of violence as an economic practice creates self-stabilising structures: What is externally perceived as a sustained, continued violent conflict is indeed a transformation of the market economy, now integrating violence as a serious option. These “markets of violence” are the basic structure of war economies, being the ideal spaces for CCNs now established as “warlords” to conduct their business. Violence allows CCN a comparatively cheap exploitation of resources and achievement of economic goals, yet it also forces them to heavily rely on external support such as arms and financial proliferation. Elwert calls warlords “managers of violence”, for “modern wars necessitate strategic planning and logistics” (87), i.e. the coordination of practice (trade, violence) within a Capital Cluster over a calculated period of time. Characteristic for the functioning of markets of violence is a strategic cost-benefit relationship between violence, trade and time (cf. chart 12). The optimal profit (encompassing the accumulation of both, material and symbolic capital) resulting from the available channels of trade is to be achieved at minimal costs of violence in an appropriate time span. Time itself, however, is a precious resource required for the successful accomplishment of operations, it’s prolongation (upholding the structural conditions of the violent conflict) can thus often be an aspired goal of warlordism. Since the costs of violence are directly linked to the intensity of interest required for its implementation, various above mentioned mechanisms relying on emotional conditions (as a very cost-effective possibility for mobilisation) are continuously being applied by warlords, reflected in the dynamics illustrated so far.



*Chart 12: Markets of Violence: The strategic triangle of violence, trade and time
(based on Elwert 1999: 88).*

Modern mass media and the systemic opportunities available in industrialised societies further facilitate the distribution and hence impact of propaganda and meta-narratives strategically interpreting the ongoing events, making mobilisation “more quickly and cheaply” and converting “the fear of people to mass participation in military actions (which are economically profitable for a small minority)” (90). The mechanisms described in the previous chapter all contribute to a transformation of the cognitive structure of relevance, emphasising meta-cleavages and associated labels of identification as the primary schemes of orientation, while blending out cross-cutting or strategically irrelevant identifications and memberships (e.g. based on occupation, language, education, class, religion, etc.). Ideology becomes a commodity sold for the price of human lives, new trade sectors substitute the formerly state-controlled market economy (theft, robbery, enslavement and hostage trafficking, drug and luxury trade, weapons, etc.), also shifting the traditional opportunities for income. Culturalistic interpretations of conflicts fail to account for the antagonistic competitions at heart of a conflict - not identity-specific values are excluding each other and creating mutually exclusive situations only resolvable through violence, but economic interests in the broader sense (sometimes even specific goals in the narrow sense of economic understanding). In fact, Elwert tends to call markets of violence a form of “radical free market economy” (98), for it is not limited in any way by comprehensive and generally applicable sanction mechanisms; it is a market economy encompassing almost every aspect of life - for a CCN engaged in warlordism death becomes a mere variable in terms of its financial costs. Yet interestingly, successful warlords are never some small criminals suddenly empowered in the space of impunity, but social agents who have been integrated into the previous political system by virtue of their interests, capitals and social position. In fact, in order to sustain in a war economy, any warlord has to have at least the basic know-how of the mechanisms underlying market economy. The shift from non-violent to violent conflict is *not* a radical break in the social continuum with all its internal structuring, power relations, and economic distributions (although the dissolution of the state monopoly implies at least an institutional crash) - it merely changes the operative conditions of the social continuum introducing violence as a new variable for interest implementation. “Markets of violence do not develop and exist in vacuum. They grow out of self-organising social systems (...), depend on clients, suppliers, banks and other services outside their area.” They further “need external infrastructure” (99) and support, usually quickly available due to the potential of cost-effective profits, calculated by other nation states, regional actors and organisations or transnational corporations.

In regard to the genocide in Rwanda, Dieter Neubert also observes that the state-based “loss of social control” impeded any possibilities for internal de-escalation strategies, creating a “space open to violence” as the framework in which the tragic slaughtering could happen (cf. Neubert 1999: 174). Supplementing Neubert’s approach I would like to emphasise the dissolution of the *state-based* monopoly of violence as a process leading not directly to the escalation of massive violence, but giving way for cluster coordination on a sub-state level, being totally in the control of elites and influential actors, partially functionaries of the previous state system, which inhibited them to implement their well planned violence-related strategies in an operational institutional context. Also in the case of Yugoslavia, there “does seem to have been a fair amount of coordination in Serb areas mainly by Milošević’s secret police” (Mueller 2000: 49), despite the seemingly anarchic chaos in which homogenous parts of the population engage in collective violence. Paramilitary warlord units, peripheral gangs and criminals have been mandated by CCNs to pursue their own profits, strategically directed at “the other group” (i.e. the potential electorate and supporters of the political opposition, framed in ethnic terms), rewarded for their actions by their own loots. “Similarly, the initial fighting forces of Bosnia and of Croatia were also substantially made up of small bands of criminals and violent opportunists recruited or self-recruited from street gangs and organized mobs” (50). A closer look at the actual dynamics of violence clearly shows that the ethnic framing uncritically absorbed by Western mass media did not correspond to the developments on the ground, as the conflict perpetuated. The self-declared combat units “soon began plaguing the defended without regard to ethnicity” (57). The transition from a non-violent to a violent conflict situation as a shift in the structural context enabling the emergence of a clear war economy, which itself had not much to do anymore with the ideological frames superimposed by the elites and propagated by the media, is brilliantly exemplified by Mueller’s analysis of the Yugoslav wars:

“Those in the right positions quickly discovered a lucrative opportunity to trade with the enemy, and hundreds of millions of Deutschemarks’ worth of weaponry, ammunition, fuel, and goods were exchanged across the front lines. The Serbs in Bosnia, after all, enjoyed a major military advantage in that, because of the deft manipulations of Milošević and crew early in the war, they inherited masses of weaponry from the Yugoslav national army. Once the war settled down a bit, many of the Serb leaders in Bosnia went looking for buyers and found them nearby: The Croats and the Muslims were eager for weapons with which to attack the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia (and, for a time, each other). There were opportunities in the other direction as well; the speaker of

the Bosnian Serb assembly, for example, made millions buying fuel from Croatia and then selling it to Croatia's Serb enemies in Bosnia. One senior Serbian commander in Bosnia sold a Muslim village some heavy artillery and then retired with his family to Serbia. Croats could sometimes rent tanks from the Serbs at a going rate of DM 1,000 per day. Whether they had to pay extra for insurance is not recorded" (Mueller 2000: 58).

While a transition back to a non-violent handling of an interest-based conflict seems possible only through the exhaustion of resources (including external support!), the imposition targeted sanctions and/or blockades as well as internal shifts in orientation (cf. Elwert 1999: 99; presupposing, however, a shift in interests due to cost-benefit considerations, *note*), a robust preemptive intervention not only by controlled violence but also strong and directed publicity aimed at the disclosure of internal power-related interests disguised by an ideological frame projected on the totality of the population, can under optimal circumstances have a significant impact on the development of the conflict and prevent its violent escalation on a larger scale.

Georg Elwert's concept of "markets of violence" is correctly being amended by Günther Schlee, who identifies in the approach a "neglect of the limitations imposed by social structures and the conventional logic of identification, which limit even the rationally acting radically egoistic warlords" (Schlee 2004a: 149). However, having introduced the present model with an illustration of the sociological concepts underlying Bourdieu's theory of practice, it instantly becomes evident that any rationality and conscious practice even by the most "radically egoistic warlords" is always limited by the internalised structures reflected in the habitus. Ethnicity (and analogous concepts of social differentiation) is not simply a lie, propaganda or fictional ideology, it *is* a cognitive dimension of categorisation, even though socially constructed and superimposed on by themselves meaningless markers of difference, activated in instances of violent conflict and operating as a channelling device for potential economic interests. In Somalia, "groups are not fractured and alliances are not formed by the sheer arbitrary will of warlords but, rather, (...) these processes follow patterns which can already be found in precolonial times" (151), thus making it all the more difficult for external observers to identify the capital-related interests in a field seemingly operating along old cleavages, inscribed in the habitus and regenerated by practice. With reference to the case of Sudan, Behrends and Schlee identify the following criteria fundamental for the ongoing conflict, often perceived as a situation of collective violence, despite revealing characteristics for what has been discussed in this chapter under the term of "markets of violence" and divergence or heterogeneity of interests (cf. Behrends & Schlee 2009: 176 et seq.):

- Various CCNs display strong interests in the maintenance of a conflict situation, for a strong and self-reliant government leading a peaceful and prosperous state would impede the implementation of the CCNs' aspirations.
- The ethnic-religious macro-categories of Africans vs. Arabs are historically inadequate. They crystallised as mobilisation frames *in the course of* the conflict, allowing the CCNs to create more extensive alliances.
- The economic interests are centred around the resource of oil, leading to massive imports of arms and the agitation of segments of the population against each other, covered by an ideological umbrella that conceals the underlying power-related claims.
- The extension of potential (transnational) alliances led to today's brutality, complexity and tediousness of the conflict on a local level. Only a gradual reduction of combatting actors may contribute to focussing on the stabilisation of the region.

So far a comprehensive perspective on the dynamics of emerging violent conflicts was presented. Based on the theory of practice I departed to the examination of actor-based mechanisms underlying the escalation of conflicts from low-intensity to high-intensity violence. Empirical insights provided a variety of facts from which an awareness and understanding could be deduced, against which the theoretical approach at hand was subsequently tested. We realised that any efficient and successful approach to conflict transformation can only be conceived on the basis of a far more differentiated perception of conflict dynamics than is usually absorbed and transmitted into the scientific realm by external observers such as international mass media. In the following chapter implications for the theory of conflict studies as well as the practice of conflict management and transformation shall be contemplated. What lessons can be learned? How can we escape the analytical dilemma of a "sandbox" perception, itself contributing to the consolidation of conflict cleavages? How can the insights from this comprehensive approach be implemented, what is realistically possible, what is probable and what is preferable?

6. Lessons learned: Implications for theory and practice

In the initial hypothesis two basic options for perceiving and dealing with the situation of a violent social conflict have been presented: Either as an inevitable clash between two or more antagonistic, more or less homogenous groups that differ from each other by their natural and primordial quality of ethnicity, race, or the like - or as a conflict of interests between influential individual social actors and their political cliques, representing the node of a Capital Cluster, which they ideologically frame to underpin their claims. The comprehensive analysis presented in this paper, supported by numerous empirical examples (primarily the cases of the Rwandan genocide and the Yugoslavian wars), clearly show that the first perspective has no actual substance nor practical evidence proving its case. Nevertheless, as soon as a violent social conflict arises somewhere on our planet and catches the attention of international media,⁵⁸ a quick browse through the newspaper, TV and radio channels reveals the remarkable predominance of this perspective. Be it Rwanda, Yugoslavia, Somalia, the Middle East, Sudan, the DRC, or the recent violence in Kyrgyzstan instigated by the former president Kurmanbek Bakiyev - everywhere ethnic groups are clashing, cultural cleavages are becoming the frontlines of the new wars, just as Samuel P. Huntington predicted it almost a decade ago. This tendency, or in fact - the cognitive perception of this tendency, poses a serious dilemma for conflict theory as a science aimed at the understanding of social violence and providing of reasonable methods for conflict management, transformation and resolution, as subsequently implemented by peacemaking agents such as the United Nations, national and regional units and non-governmental actors. There is a clear red line connecting the perception of social reality to the practice influencing the further development of this reality. In the chapters above I tried to illustrate the problems arising from a pretended description of social mechanisms without truly appreciating the micropolitical dynamics beneath the apparent and beyond the perceived. Considering a more comprehensive approach as presented above, what conclusions can be drawn for the studies of conflict theory? How could this approach contribute to a more efficient practice of conflict transformation and what are the limits primarily imposed by the interests of nation states and mass media?

⁵⁸ John Bowen rightly notes in this context that “[b]y and large, the news media focus on countries racked by violence and ignore the many more cases of peaceful relations among different peoples” (Bowen 1996: 11).

6.1. Conflict Theory revisited: From the “Huntington Dilemma” towards critical rationality and functional efficiency

The difficulty of challenging common perspectives on violent conflicts lies exactly in the conditions of existence being the subject of analysis in the present approach challenging these structures. In other words, the current paradigmatic habitus related to the cognitive processing of violent social conflicts (primarily shared by a rising global public being in an informational dependency to the sources provided by mass media and political acts of speech, also shared by a broad scientific community and numerous agents actively involved in the management of those conflicts), being the structured product of the conditions of the social field that contributed to its creation, also structures the practice resulting from the cognitive matrix embedded in the habitus. It provides, so to speak an unconscious framework of “common sense” upon which the mainstream analysis is being constructed. Three elements are fundamental in the scientific reproduction of this habitus: (1) a tendency of deductive reasoning based on the most readily available, most easily accessible and most simply reproducible interpretational frames,⁵⁹ (2) an intuitive desire for reductionism combined with (3) a kind of scientific dogmatism or profiling of the *ego* within a cognitive context capable of its recognition. The interplay of these aspects perpetuating the cognitive schemes of group conflict leads to the logically not tenable curiosity, that somehow, “when we talk about ethnicity, and even more when we talk about ethnic conflict, we almost automatically find ourselves talking about ethnic groups” (Brubaker 2004: 9). The force of the *implicitly assumed* projects itself as a putative logical link between different conceptual categorisations and manifests in the resulting practice of the actual recognition of those groups being *per se* the reason and cause of a violent conflict. Yet the fallacy lies in the imagined finality of understanding once “achieve[d] a practical mastery of the classificatory schemes which in no way implies symbolic mastery (...) of the processes practically applied” (Bourdieu 2000: 88). Reading newspaper reports, I can easily understand the argument that ethnic groups are fighting each other, yet I most certainly will not understand the complex processes leading to this argument. Moreover, the informations provided by a superficial glance through the

⁵⁹ Following an internal logic of the famous Ockham’s razor: *entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem* (entities must not be multiplied beyond necessity), or: The simplest explanation is the best. In the case of an analytical examination of emerging violent conflicts, however, the simplest explanation is indeed the best for CCNs to perpetuate the conflict as well as for media to efficiently and rapidly distribute sensational information (or, more accurate, ideological frames sold as information). Yet if one’s intention is to comprehensively understand the dynamics of a conflict and deduce possibilities for its transformation into a peaceful state, the simplest explanation has to be recognised as merely a functional mechanism operating *within* a far more complex reality of actor-based processes.

newspaper will not enable me to differentiate the argument as a descriptive explanation of the conflict from its functional significance as merely a frame within a much more complex conflict reality. Such arguments, being labels with an “implicit teleology of ascriptive difference” (King 2004: 451) can easily masquerade as causes of conflicts of which they actually are the product. It follows that “emphasizing social identities can blind researchers to the mechanisms that are at work in shaping them” (*ibid.*).

The analysts’s problem here lies in the absorption of an inverted causality: Instead of deciphering the conflict mechanisms that lead to the emergence of a frame retrospectively postulated to be the cause of the conflict, the frame is simply being acknowledged as a cause. The awfully often uncritically cited, now deceased, Samuel P. Huntington defined the central topic of his “Clash of Civilisations” as: Cultures and the identity of cultures, on the highest level thus the identity of civilisations (*Kulturkreise* in the German translation, cf. Huntington 1998: 19). A new world order based on cultural values was supposed to emerge. Efforts to shift a society from one civilisation to another were supposed to be futile. Yet over a decade later, despite the enormous reception of Huntington’s theories and similar science-fictions, not much has crystallised of this proclaimed world order, on the contrary: economic interests increasingly continue to shape the international system and the emergence of new alliances, urban centres in countries such as the United Arab Emirates are “culturally” closer to New York and other cosmopolitan metropolises than to any other Arabic city. The sheer survival of the West, so Huntington, would depend on the American’s affirmation of their Western identity. Since 2009 a man with African and Muslim ancestors is president of the United States, being internationally highly regarded and holding the Peace Nobel Prize. Huntington himself, so it seems, did not survive. A closer look at his spectacular tome reveals a whole bunch of blunt statements confirming the necessity of identification along cultural cleavages, since these will be the new frontlines of the future. Rarely does the author bother to resort to solid empirical evidence supporting his claims, at numerous instances even insights contradicting his postulates are being noted, only to dismiss them simply by insisting on the rightness of his personal perception. “Civilizations obviously blend and overlap, and may include subcivilizations. (...) Civilizations are nonetheless meaningful entities, and while the lines between them are seldom sharp, they are real” (Huntington 1993: 24). Considering everything that has been discussed so far, the question arises what actually makes cultural, religious or ethnic cleavages real. Indeed, the categorisation of populations and their fission into “groups” is a meaningful practice for a very small minority of social agents profiting from the instigation of “collective conflict”. Moreover, the author’s argumentation seems to be trapped in quite banal scientific mistakes. As has been exhaustively shown in this paper,

information, communication and transparency deficits increase social uncertainty which in turn opens spaces for a facilitated absorption of collective frames. Nevertheless Huntington argues that the increasing interactions “between peoples of different civilizations (...) intensify civilization consciousness and awareness of differences between civilizations and commonalities within civilizations” (25), which is exactly the opposite of what is logically to be expected and empirically affirmed. Volumes could and indeed have been written about Huntington’s lack of scientific scrutiny, absurdity of theory and potential dangers of a broad perception. At this point it suffices to say that what we are dealing with here is not a comprehensive analytical, descriptive approach appreciating the complexity of dynamics underlying the superficial (and often even difficultly discernible) perception of clashing civilisations, but rather a political doctrine intrinsically related to the extension of US hegemony. In his own words, Huntington provides a bunch of “descriptive hypotheses as to what the future may be like. If these are plausible hypotheses, (...) it is clearly in the interest of the West to promote greater cooperation and unity within its own civilization” (48 et seq.). The statement is followed by an extensive list of political, economic and military recommendations (cf. Huntington’s position as consultant to the U.S. Department of State), all based on some “descriptive hypotheses as to what the future may be like” (*nota bene*: not describing the contemporary reality but some hypothetical future), all in all contributing to nothing but the construction and reactive consolidation of precisely these massive and potentially dangerous imagined and postulated sociopolitical categorisations.

The highly dubious and problematic confusion of causes and results in emerging violent social conflicts - be it described as cultural, ethnic, religious, national, or tribal, which after the most prominent representative of this culturalistic school I tend to call the “Huntington dilemma”, has two particularly misleading consequences: “First, hatred does not need much scaffolding. (...) Most civil wars (...) have a way of manufacturing their own inevitability. Second, the ‘ethnic conflict’ label can encourage analysts and potential peacemakers to conflate two distinct issues -- the pathologies of individual belief and the rational motivations for group mobilization -- or, in other words, to mistake the causes of hatred for the causes of violence” (King 2001). Interestingly, as can be deduced from the analytical model at hand, the causes of hatred are functionally linked to the causes of violence: rational motivations of individual agents, especially CCNs, contribute to the processes of legitimisation and mobilisation, which create the circumstances for social fears and the absorption of ideological frames. The latter in turn facilitate the implementation of violence to satisfy the rational motivations. Evidence further suggests that ethnic or cultural myths and fears are especially relevant in the first phase of violence leading to a gradual consolidation of the opportunity

structures enabling markets of violence or war economies. While those collective framings are well established in the perception of external observers in situations of sustained social conflict, they usually “have become largely irrelevant to most of the actors in these dramas. In fact, the current status quo (...) suits most folks just fine” (King 2001) - more precisely: suits the Capital Cluster Nodes profiting from the *status quo* just fine. While markets of violence flourish and disputes remain unresolved, residual structures of governance weaken and dissolve, giving way to corruption and totally unsanctioned means of interest implementation. In terms of content, collective frames or dimensions of identification such as ethnicity, culture or even abstract civilisations have almost nothing to do with the issue, yet their subjectively perceived meaning can play a significant functional role, resulting from what Henry Hale identifies as a combination of “the fundamental human imperative for uncertainty reduction with the limited cognitive capacity of the human brain” (Hale 2004: 470). A cognitive perspective on emerging conflict hence shifts its analytical attentions away from the intuitive assumption of “groups” as basic entities of analysis to the processual dimension of group formation dynamics “such as classification, categorization, and identification” (Brubaker 2004: 79) being subjective activities of objectification. In contrast to culturalistic accounts usually relying on ideological (e.g. nationalistic) propaganda discourses and being unable to account for the function of those discourses in violent instances and their occurrence only in particular points of time and space only (i.e. under specific circumstances), the present approach recognises such mechanisms by highlighting the dynamics of practice and cognition as an interplay of internalised dispositions and external structures processed through the habitus. Additionally, a recognition of the underlying causal heterogeneity immensely raises the complexity of the analysis, however, it allows to critically deconstruct the own biases of perception and appreciates the driving force of interest-based rationality. Brubaker and Laitin in this context plead for a “disaggregation” of the common notions of ethnic violence as homogenous variables created in various processes of public coding and absorbed into sociological analysis (cf. Brubaker & Laitin 1998: 446). To scientifically operate with ethnicity as a primordial element of identification is “patently silly, and its silliness pervades much of the commentary on ethnic conflict, both in the press and in more substantial works” (cf. Hardin 1995b: 37). In fact, any kind of group affiliation that is claimed to be natural and an in-born disposition of an individual cannot be “presocial” for the simple reason that “nothing that must first be socially learned can be primordial” (*ibid.*). What is socially learned, however, has a social function linked to the efficiency of a social process reproducing the social structures or adapting them respectively. Social structures in turn are the objectification and institutionalisation of power relations, as clearly follows from the logic of the theory of

practice. Hence the basic variables of a culturalistic analysis ('a=0' in my initial hypothesis, cf. chart 2) leading to the "Huntington dilemma" when applied on a methodology aimed at positive conflict transformation are by themselves the results of interest-based power contestations and having rather doctrinal than analytical properties. It follows, as initially assumed in chapter 2, that perception or analysis of a social reality, always being a subjective cognitive process emerging in the contextual field of (scientific) doxa reflecting the structure of the field and its power relations, has intrinsic moral and ethical implications. In the following a few considerations concerning justice, ethics, rationality and the normative factor both in social sciences and its reception in the political field shall be presented.

The epistemological reflexivity contemplated primarily by Bourdieu and the later generation of post-structuralists, opened a new path capable of transcending the nihilistic relativism of Jacques Derrida and the deconstructivists as well as the absolutism represented by the 'modernistic' rationalism of Jürgen Habermas (cf. Bourdieu & Wacquant 2006: 77). The critical or reflexive approach underlying the present analysis inherited Habermas' normative claim of a possibility and necessity of scientific "truth", yet it also transcended the illusion of an absolute rationality rooted in the historically evolved structures of the mind and language. Concurring with Derrida and Foucault, Bourdieu insists on the deconstruction of knowledge (and cognitively circumscribed modes of knowledge processing), suggesting that categories are contingent social derivatives and instruments of (symbolic) domination that operate constructing, and that the very structures of the discourse about the social world themselves quite often are social pre-structures with a strong political content (cf. 78). Truth (rationality / reason) is hence seemingly found in the objectified reality of the social field, yet its own matrix of perception is constructed by the historical nexus of positions and dispositions, reflected in the habitus and reproduced by practice. It follows that scientific theory building is a practice of sense-making embedded in the structures of a rationality that is highly determined by its own specific history and cognitive evolution (i.e. the path constituted by the Western conceptualisations of social reality as reflected in the process of the Enlightenment and numerous other developments based on the social distribution of power structures), although it seems quite objectified. If we accept the premise of "theory building as sense-making" with a normative aspect of functional efficiency, we doubtlessly need to aim for a "multi-faceted understanding of what constitutes theoretical work, grounded in the goal of integrating the self-conscious perspectives of participants themselves" (King 2004: 453) as well as the critical reflection of our own perspectives. In respect to violent conflicts, a research programme based on a plurality of methods instead of an inductive reasoning relying on the structures of the

own habitus can “yield a far more complex picture not only of the interests and intentions of violent actors but also of the durable social meanings with which their acts are invested” (454). Critical rationality and functional efficiency as a new orientation for social and political sciences also has to carefully consider what actually constitutes *evidence*, instead of reifying the aggregated category of *data* as a pool of presumably objective, that is - legitimising variables for theory building. Absorbing definitions and cognitive conceptualisations that in fact function as a device within more complex processes does not contribute to valuable scientific insights, but to the camouflage of ideological frames and categorisations (reflecting the power relations in the field) and its reproductions in ordinary, everyday cognitive operations in a semantic shell resembling the symbolic importance of science. In a beautiful analogy to Arnold Schoenberg⁶⁰ Bourdieu defines the normative significance of his sociology: “Ich schreibe, damit die Leute, und zunächst einmal jene, die das Wort haben, die Wortführer, nicht mehr in bezug auf die soziale Welt Lärm produzieren können, der den Anschein von Musik vermittelt” (Bourdieu & Wacquant 2006: 85). In this sense social science is to be understood as *politics*, consciously aimed at the revelation and transformation of those principles of perception we use to construct the social world (and hence the realm of science, society and not least ourselves) and consequently are potentially able to change in a rational, ethical and mutually constructive way (cf. *ibid.* 93). The first step is not to demand normative political rights for science, but to realise that scientific (or more generally, any cognitive) treatment of social reality *is* and always *has been* a political act in the sense that it actively shapes the reality it perceives through practice aligned with the predefined schemes. Considering the case of violence and conflict, one has to note that “the upsurge in writing on ethnicity and violence in the last decade is a direct result of the fact that the wars in the Balkans interested Western policymakers. (...) Indeed, on the scale of human misery, the postcommunist wars barely register” (King 2001). The disproportionality of attached meaning to different instances and events in the development of our social history is in direct relation to the interest-based power structures of the social environment in which the events unfold. What is important and what is not, what is cultural, ethnic, or criminal, ancient and natural or recent and a lie, is not clearly defined by the content of a definition or argumentative specification, but rather by the structures from which these definitions arise. Conflict leaders, mass media and subsequently the wider public do not speak about ethnic violence in Kyrgyzstan because the “violence” simply is “ethnic” (can other forms of practice such as “running” or “drinking” also be ethnic?), but rather because the available cognitive

⁶⁰ “Ich komponiere, damit die Leute nicht mehr in der Lage sind, Musik zu schreiben”. Bourdieu quoting Schoenberg, in: Bourdieu (1993) *Soziologische Fragen*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, p. 18.

structures inscribed in the habitus make the coding of violence being ethnic a plausible and efficient mechanisms for those actors profiting most from it.

Structures of a field enabling a minority of agents with sufficient capital to implement their interests by framing the field itself (encompassing the totality of agents) in ideological terms clearly impede the chances for an advancement of rationality. Experience shows that social systems having a high degree of institutional opportunities for social certainty, informational transparency, peaceful conflict resolution, political integration, just participation and access - i.e. a field of highly diversified interests horizontally spread among a multitude of actors, radically decrease the probability of violent outbreaks even though the quantity of interest-based conflicts is much higher. In contrast, so-called "centralized polities (...) are less stable than 'dispersed' systems, in which each of many smaller groups is forced to seek out allies to achieve its goals" (Bowen 1996: 11). The rationality of violent conflict prevention (or its absence) is a crucial element of the political process in a society - having the dual monopoly of power and definition states (besides mass media) contribute most intensely to the construction of the social field, potentially changing or maintaining both the principles of perception and the actual form of governance. John Bowen gives the example of Nigeria as a state actively shaping the political processes influencing the intensity of inter-group tensions. Having implemented "new federalist politics based on multiethnic coalitions" (11) the political system indeed changed massively, however, as an unfortunate consequence "excessive fragmentation has broken up the multiethnic coalitions and encouraged ethnic politics anew" (12). What remains clear in any case is that the implementation of rational governance, or the form of governance as such, creates, upholds or changes the categories of perception of the social world, being not the cause for but the result of interest-based practice. Loïc Wacquant observes that according to the theory of practice social rules and boundaries are temporarily and spatially bounded regularities that exist as long as one continues to uphold the institutional conditions underlying them (cf. Bourdieu & Wacquant 2006: 84). The relationship between cognitive schemes of perception, power relations and interests of social actors, and the structural conditions of perception and practice leads in regard to violence and conflict to the question of political morality and just governance. With his characteristic clarity of mind Bourdieu observes that a realistic formulation of the question implies to ask pragmatically about the conditions required for political practices to be permanently tested for their universalisation (Bourdieu 1998: 224). This testing corresponds to Kant's *categorical imperative* or the logical critique of ethical claims - is the practice of an actor desirable for him, if he were to be the object of the practice? A gradual institutionalisation of such a deontological understanding of ethics follows the critical rationality of practice, respecting the

totality of interests distributed in a social field and primarily limited by their reflexive or self-directed desirability, as well as contributes to a functional efficiency in regard to the interests of a social majority (being defined as broad as physically possible) and accounting for the value of human life. It seems clear that democratic and liberal interests contradict elitist ones - the more permanently the former can be institutionalised, the lower the probability of the latter to emerge and materialise in times of social crisis as CCN-based conflicts of interests coded in collective terms. But how can a process of implementing ethics and rationality into the political process look like? How can the potentially disastrous dynamics of social coding be managed in the framework of inclusive and functionally efficient governance? It has already exhaustively been shown that violence “becomes ‘ethnic’ (or ‘racial’ or ‘nationalist’) through the meanings attributed to it by perpetrators, victims, politicians, officials, journalists, researchers, relief workers, and others. Such acts of framing and narrative encoding do not simply *interpret* the violence; they *constitute* it as *ethnic*” (Brubaker 2004: 16). The use of collective framings is nothing but a political strategy. Similarly to the normative awareness of social science pleaded for in this paper, a form of governance capable of integrating the rational interests of its democratic constituents based on a deontological institutional framework could provide strategies easily de-legitimising the content and hence the mobilising force of ethnic framings simply by its implicit structural condition that deduces the monopolised definition power of the state from the plurality (of interests) of social actors embedded in the field, through the main frameworks of education, transparency, participation and free flow of information. Based on the theoretical discussion above and the insights presented so far, a further examination of the potentials for a more comprehensive understanding and implementation of conflict transformation shall be provided in the following chapter.

6.2. Conflict Transformation: The possible, the probable, and the preferable

From the above discussion it follows that the possibilities of changing structures of perception as a basis for a new cognitive perspective on violent social conflicts and subsequently the resulting opportunities of their transformation are limited by their own constituents, reflected in the interests and power relations distributed among *all* involved actors, i.e. CCNs, peripheral social agents, military and political fractions, local, regional, inter- and transnational organisations, economic and media corporations, humanitarian organisations,

as well as other nation states and respective intervention troops. As long as a “clash of cultures” is the most meaningful coding of social mechanisms for most of those actors (especially the ones being in dominant positions in the social field due to their accumulated forms of capital) leading to the most profitable results in their actions, it will remain the dominant paradigm. Before raising some ideas about preferable and probable approaches capable of supplementing the current structures of conflict transformation, additionally to what has already been discussed in chapter 6.1., the term *culture*, its significance in the perception of social reality and its cognitive fundamentals shall be examined more closely.

In the context of biased social interaction the term *culture* in its classificatory function, separating different “cultures” from each other based on more or less arbitrary elements (be it language, phenotype or any random marker, depending on the social constellation and political need to separate), is interchangeable with *nation*, *race*, *ethnicity*, *tribe*, *religion* or even *class*. The quality of segregation is not one of content (although content is the argument, being incontestable in a comparative sense due to its fundamental subjectivity), but rather one of labels being an instrumentalised function of CCNs. For example, in perceived situations of religious conflicts, as it was the case in the breakdown of former Yugoslavia, religion was “hardly ever discussed in religious terms (...) although feelings about religious affiliation were intense” (Schlee 2004: 12). *Culture* (and the like) operates on an emotional level that is capable of blocking rational communication due to its incontestability.

As the slow and yet unfinished process of Enlightenment in Western Europe exemplifies, religion (being but one of many belief-based large-group identity concepts) over the centuries gave way to secularisation, thus enabling new possibilities of social communication, interaction and mutual integration. The project of Enlightenment did not succeed by rejecting content and claim of the religious ideology, but by providing a field of rationality with an *agnostic* attitude (cf. chapter 5.1.) towards ideology as such - not even engaging in the debate over inter-subjectively incontestable content, rather embracing religious identification within the dimension of personal belief and thus paving the way for new and rational ways of human interaction. To appreciate *culture* as a dimension of the same realm of large-group identity concepts and to expand the field of secularisation beyond religion seems to be merely the logical continuation of the Enlightenment. My claim is that with the proper perception constructive communication can take place in an unrestrained way *beyond* culture (in contrast to *between* cultures), based on deliberate and self-conscious rationality and common ethics.

Taking into account the comprehensive approach presented in Chapter 5, it seems rather logical to abolish the use of “culture” as an explanatory variable within the scientific field altogether. In his central writing Ernest Gellner acknowledges the complicated issue with

“culture” in an analytical use, however, he fails to find a sustainable escape from this epistemological trap: “Definitions of culture (...) are notoriously difficult and unsatisfactory. It is probably best to approach this problem by using this term without attempting too much in the way of formal definition, and looking at what culture *does*” (Gellner 1997: 7). In fact, generations of scientists have squandered their time trying to satisfy the formality of defining culture. Yet ignoring and at the same time recognising “culture” as a social fact through looking at its function is a scientifically serious and basic mistake Ernest Gellner makes. Let us go one step back to the religious universe in order to illustrate this fallacy: “culture” is as much a useless variable in social analysis as for instance “God” - it is a mere selectively constructed mode of perceiving and justifying (or condemning) social interaction, hence its multitude of definitions. The absurdity of Gellners conclusion becomes clear in a paraphrasing comparison with the example of “God” as a scientific variable: “We do not know what God is, but at looking at what God *does*” we are able to arbitrarily construct an object of analysis that becomes perceived reality. It is easy to find social effects and to attribute them to the *doings* of a God, as easy as to attribute them to some kind of presupposed culture as an independent and impersonal entity. Yet the flabbiness of any definition of culture is so striking, that a certain quality, well acquired by Gellner, becomes obvious: culture is a miraculous argumentation technique *instrumentalised* to create certain realities, however, it is by no means an adequate category of social analysis.⁶¹ In order not to blindly follow this narrative mode of thinking and lapse into “confusions and contradictions resulting from the theory that ‘culture’ and personality can each be deduced from the other” (Bourdieu 2000: 84), it is crucial to deconstruct social interaction (from a systemic as well as actor-oriented perspective) into the basic processes beneath the apparent and beyond the perceived (which, in contrast to its nebulous hosting entity, can very well be located and defined), as I have attempted in this paper.

What does all this have to do with conflict transformation? Dismissing the idea of pseudo-natural categories being a fundamental variable of analysis and focussing on “a disaggregating, non-groupist approach” has the potential to both unveil the “critical importance of intra-ethnic mechanisms in generating and sustaining putatively interethnic

⁶¹ Similarly was the referential use of terms such as “the social” in respective scientific texts in the beginning of the 20th century, without appropriate differentiation between the numerous dynamics and structural dispositions underlying the totality of social perception constructed as some kind of phenomenological entity, cf. *inter alia* Simmel, Georg (1908) *Soziologie*. Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot. The analytical absurdity and scientific flub-dub culminates in the definition of “ethnicity” as a combination of two dimensions of group membership: “culture” and “social structure” (cf. Bös 2005: 257).

conflict" (Brubaker 2004: 19) and implement the highly significant understanding of "local cleavages and intracommunity dynamics" (Kalyvas 2003: 487) as illustrated in the previous chapters. Such a comprehension opposing the primordiality of groups as homogenous, self-sustained entities living in a historical continuum of origin and destiny provides a higher sensitivity to the variability and dynamism underlying the nature of "groupness". Since crystallised social categories may be more the result of instigated social violence and respective coding mechanisms than their cause, it seems only logical to focus the analytical attention and practical intervention on the processes and dynamics leading to the emergence of such social categories, as has been attempted in this paper. We have realised that "groupness" requires sustained political practice counteracting what Max Weber identified as "routinisation" (*Veralltäglicung*, cf. also Brubaker 2004: 19), e.g. the demise of group-related identification in contexts of war economies perpetuated merely by the consolidation of interest-based exploitation and violence-based implementation of business relations (cf. chapter 5.2.7.). Accessing precisely those mechanisms capable of shaping the trends and directions of groupness would allow to gradually implement new framings substituting antagonistic categorisations. Since the basic function of social framing is the provision of sense-making points of reference in situations characterised by a high degree of social uncertainty due to the collapse or lack of appropriate institutional means, a targeted dispersion of counter-frames, having the aim of both accounting for the teleological demand for interest-implementation by the relevant majority constituting the executive potential for mobilisations aspired by CCNs as well as unveiling the essential conflict of interests between CCNs, could provide a cognitive context drastically diminishing the probability for outbreaks of large-scale violence. Bluntly, the claim here is to consciously induce counter-propaganda as a prime pillar of intervention, aimed at the deconstruction of potentially destructive collective identifications by pointing at the underlying elitist conflicts of interest. This claim may sound very idealistic or naive, especially since in most instances concerned, coding agents (even the intervening ones) have their own interests not compatible with such a perspective. However, as Bourdieu noted, the structure is not unchangeable (Bourdieu 1998: 49), and interest intensity, distribution and tendency highly depend on the structural circumstances provided *inter alia* by social and political institutions, such as a strong civil society highly integrated into the political process or other institutional means guaranteeing transparency and information exchange (e.g. in a developed educational system). As examined in chapter 5.1.3., the interplay between heterodoxy (based on a multiplicity of interests) and orthodoxy (aimed at the restoration of doxa as the universal social framing) is being activated in situations of crisis, yet crisis by itself still does not contribute to the production of a critical discourse

(Bourdieu 2000: 169) necessary for a development towards rational and inclusive governance. On the contrary, crisis and the collapse of the institutional structure raising social uncertainty facilitates hegemonic framing mechanisms and increases the probability of violence. Therefore, counter-framing has to be conceived as a crucial short-term measure of intervention once the inclusive structural conditions cannot be provided anymore, accompanied by robust targeted missions aware of the dynamics at hand. In the long run, the work of institution-building and state-building in the reconstruction phase of a post-conflict situation will by itself not guarantee a sustained transformation of the conflict, unless the consolidated cognitive framings inscribed in the habitus will be overcome by repeated, patterned, formalised and sustained practice forming the *modus operandi*, i.e. re-structuring the structures. “School textbooks (...) will not do the trick. Rather, elites at all levels must be bound together” (King 2004: 446) in various long-term interactions in order to gradually overcome antagonistic group-based framings and channel relevant social interests in new patterns. In their study Collier and Hoeffler identified “the time since a previous conflict” as one important variable for the reduction of the probability of re-emerging violence, in short: “time heals” (Collier & Hoeffler 2004: 589). Another element relevant in overcoming antagonistic collective framings is what I tend to call functional teleology: the emphasis on common goals qualitatively not related to the criteria of groupness. “The conflict between two groups may not be resolvable through compromise (...). Such conflicts might be finally trumped by dramatic economic benefits of cooperation” (Hardin 1995b: 40). As the developments in Rwanda since the last decade indicate (cf. the ambitious Vision 2020), economic prospect as a non-identificational but purely interest-based policy for overcoming constructed and emotionalised identifications can have a significant impact in the reshaping of collective identities. Since in emerging violent social conflicts the “main factors (...) are not ethnic or religious differences or broadly held grievances but, rather, conditions that favor *insurgency*” (Fearon & Laitin 2003: 75) or more generally the escalation of violence, a focus on those structural conditions can further contribute to the prevention of escalations. As has also been pointed out by various economic approaches to civil war and conflict, “one of the most robust predictors of civil war onset, per capita gross domestic product, may capture in part the effect of local cleavages” (Kalyvas 2003: 481). GDP (PPP) per capita as a statistical indicator for a state’s economic prosperity is, limited by collateral factors, inversely proportional to the probability of social violence. The reason is not simply that a high level of social wealth diminishes the probability of some actor’s interest intensity in implementing their goals by means of violence, it is also to be attributed to the fact that in a social context of economic security an certainty frames necessary for coding and hence legitimising violence

have a very low level of plausibility and are not capable of mobilising a sufficient amount of executive potential to implement a CCN's interests. The activation of collective categorisations as a relevant frame of reference in a social field presupposes the existence of some kind of social instability, inequality or crisis reflected in the economic situation. The dynamic of social fission always leads in this direction, and not the other way around. In principle, dynamics of escalation are reversible. However, it "becomes more complicated the further the conflicts develop. The escalation of violence may be based on a general legitimisation of violence. In contrast, de-escalation needs a strict division of illegitimate violence and the legitimate state monopoly of violence, that counteracts all unlawful violence" (Neubert 1999: 174), a division that corresponds to the distinction between criminal and justified violence, as discussed in chapter 5.2.7. The problem with external intervention and legitimisation of violence lies in the understanding of the complexity of the dynamics. Intervention from the "outside" requires the willingness and mandate of at least those local elites being associated with the recognised government of the concerned state in order to reflect the legitimacy commonly accepted and defined by International Law. However, as soon as external actors intervene - and this is usually not the case so far - they by all means have to be aware of becoming a new party to the conflict themselves, introducing into the social field their own interests, relative power positions and available capitals. In Rwanda for instance, the UN and the involved Western countries were an essential part of the developments (cf. Neubert 1999: 174), both interested in framing the conflict in their own terms and not capable of looking beyond the internal ideological doctrines. Indeed, intervention contributes to the rise in conflict complexity, yet an awareness of the consequences in regard to the dynamics illustrated in this paper has to potential of re-shaping the existing objective and cognitive structures in a constructive way once the superficiality of perception (cf. "Huntington dilemma") has been transcended.

7. Conclusions and Prospects

International Conflict Management has developed extensively in the last 50 years and its main deficiencies clearly are to be found in the obvious obstacles, such the interests of concerned and intervening actors, the structural and bureaucratic conditions of external as well as internal conflict settlement efforts. Bearing this in mind, one has to emphasise that the present approach by no means claims to be a comprehensive examination of conflict management as such. It does not provide an explanation for everything nor a guide for peacemakers, suggesting how to proceed in every particular case, which would neither be useful nor feasible, considering the specific circumstances of any violent conflict. Nevertheless, the model elaborated in the present paper deals with a crucial and essential aspect of conflict management, as has been observed in the introduction: “another piece of the puzzle that has escaped our attention”. The banality of the fact that the difficulty in dealing with a problem starts with the perception of the problem has enormously far reaching and complex consequences. Clustered and repeated instances of social violence are integrated into a cognitive mainstream paradigm of “group conflicts”, in most cases rapidly identified as *ethnic* or *religious* conflicts. What follows from this superficial perception of the apparent is a reality shaped by clashing values, ancient hatreds and people willing to kill and willing to die for their culture. A problem constructed in such terms has only a very limited bandwidth of possible yet rarely satisfying solutions, oscillating between cooperation, coexistence, and segregation. Based on a multitude of scientific insights from a variety of social disciplines as well as a thorough examination of empirical evidence I attempted to show that an alternative perception of violent social conflicts *is* not only possible but substantially more rational, constructive and fundamentally appreciating the complexity of human behaviour. Not only has it been proved that large-group identities and beliefs framing and clustering concerned populations - in most scientific approaches as well as the public perception handled as “social facts” - are rather ideological constructions than essential core values of individuals making them capable of fierce violence, also a comprehensive model encompassing the central mechanisms underlying the dynamics of group crystallisation as cognitive processes based on modes of practice has been presented. What followed from these insights was the logical consequence that commonly perceived social group conflicts are in fact not group conflicts at all, but merely the consolidation of simplified explanatory frames overlaid on various complex micropolitical processes behind the stage. The understanding of these processes was the missing piece of the puzzle.

Once we transcended the illusion of “group conflict” and acknowledged the role of individuals, interests, power relations and diverse dispositions on a huge variety of dimensions in the social universe, the theory of practice outlined by Pierre Bourdieu gave us a starting point for a more comprehensive understanding of the complexity beneath the apparent and beyond the perceived. Based on this understanding the intrinsically strategic aspect in the relationship between social constructions of group identities and violence as a functional mechanism has been highlighted. The reference to numerous scientific contributions indicated that various elements of the presented processes, integrated into a unified framework, do exist in different clusters of literature ranging from anthropology, sociology, political science to economic theory. However, a comprehensive, integrated approach is lacking in the current scientific literature and also drastically contradicts much of the mainstream contributions. This thesis claims to provide such an approach, at least the basic outline to be further developed, revised, adjusted and expanded in the future. The main intention was to broaden the understanding and awareness of “what is behind the scenes” of violent conflicts, strongly opposing reductionistic views emerging as rhetorical legitimisations of central elites and consequently being reproduced by the media and the scientific community. In the last chapter problems and dangers of scientific and political descriptions of certain social “realities”, in the end being another subjective construction capable of actually *creating* these realities, have been contemplated. In contrast to current practice, the present approach to conflict management does not revive the *imagined* frontlines as a basis for peace negotiations, but fosters the critical reconsideration of positions acquired and emotionally internalised during the conflict, unveiling the interest-based policies of Capital Cluster Nodes being essentially in contradiction to rational public interests, provided institutional means for social certainty, transparency and participations are intact. The naive belief that observation, research and theory formation are closed, logocentric and self-referential institutions separate from the empirical world, merely passive acts not being consequential for the actual development of the observed social world, has been criticised and empirically disproved. I pledged for the awareness that any practice resulting from a certain perception of reality (and hence the perception itself) directly affects the reality and hence has imminent moral and ethical implications. The logical consequence was not to flee the potential responsibility by hiding behind some putative claims of scientific objectivity (as it is the dominant course of action in Western scientific traditions), but to emphasise the normative quality of scientific analysis. An awareness of interests as well as self-interest has the potential to contribute to the eventual construction of a social reality *functionally efficient* in the sense that it (a) creates the

framework for a majority of rational interests to be implemented on a deontological basis and (b) accounts for the value of human life as the fundamental interest of existence.

The initial hypotheses can be verified on the basis of the theoretical deductions elaborated in the course of this paper. Nevertheless, only more exhaustive empirical evidence as well as the long-term consequences of an eventual implementation of the present analytical understanding could both validate the present analytical premises as well as appropriately adjust and expand the theoretical framework. In any case, it seems undeniable that *the perception of violent social conflicts does affect the consequences of the respective analysis and / or the practice of conflict management based on that perception*. Furthermore, evidence rooted in the proposed theoretical understanding clearly suggests that:

Assumptions about the specific reality of a violent social conflict may affect the conflict situation if propagated by appropriate means of politics, media and/or scientific analysis addressed to and absorbed by concerned actors.

Cognitive frameworks inscribed in the habitus are neither right nor wrong, but merely superficial, delusive and reflecting rather elitist interests, or more comprehensive, deconstructing those interests and reflecting an awareness of the functional aspect of cognitive framings. In the former case, such a framework reified in the “understanding of a conflict situation by relevant actors corresponding to a ‘culturalistic’ group based view, leads the reality of the concerned violent conflict situation to tend towards the (difficultly resolvable) situation of a monolithic, labelled group conflict” (hypothesis 1a). On the other hand, if the “understanding of a conflict situation by relevant actors corresponds to a comprehensive conflict model (as presented in the paper), then the reality of the concerned violent conflict situation indeed may tend towards the (more easily traceable and thus resolvable) situation of a CCN-based conflict with multiple dynamics and actors” (hypothesis 1b). Since it has been proven that collective framings are being implemented by CCNs as means of legitimising their policies based on a continued interest in the violent conflict situation, it logically follows that their exposure may countervail dynamics of violence. Respectively the second hypothesis can be validated, for the “practice resulting from the respective understanding of a social conflict, applied on the conflict situation by relevant actors has consequences on the risk probability of sustained and continued violent social conflict” (hypothesis 2). While the practice resulting from a “culturalistic” group-based understanding of conflict, providing only a limited range of solutions (e.g. cooperation,

coexistence, segregation) tends to increase the risk probability of an affected society (2a), applied conflict management based on a comprehensive conflict model, providing a broader range of options, has the potential to decrease the risk probability (2b), if flanked by appropriate additional measures, such as proper institution building and policies of *functional teleology* such as economic development guaranteed by intensified cooperation and interaction. The research question has been answered thoroughly in chapter 5.2., where indeed the attempt of establishing a general model of emerging violent social conflicts has been made. While the empirical evidence suggests its validity, only long-term implementation can prove the universal adequacy of its basic constituencies. Chapter 5.2.3. focussed on the circumstances under which certain social conflicts become transformed (framed) into violent group conflicts, the following chapters (especially 5.2.6.) identified the essential common processes and dynamics underlying the emergence of violent “group conflicts”. In the last section of chapter 5.2. the question to what degree violence and identity are indeed “collective” or rather actor-based has been discussed. Throughout the paper I intended to stress the implications of the respective public perception of conflict situations and the subsequent practice of relevant actors - an issue that has been especially emphasised in chapter 6.

The implementation of a rational, comprehensive understanding not only of violent social conflicts but of the modes of human behaviour in general requires a certain habitus and awareness that emerged in the project of Enlightenment, finally shifting the role of religion from a fundamental matrix of perceiving and explaining the universe and all embedded dynamics to a more private realm of incontestable belief and thus paving the way for new modes of communication, interaction and integration. Enlightenment, however, should by no means be regarded as a closed historical period (although it unfortunately seems that way), but rather as an ongoing process that has to be extended on other concealed doctrines and ideologies shaping our every day cognitive schemes, such as the frame of “culture” or other forms of large-group identifications. Just as the coding of all human behaviour in religious terms was essentially in the interest of the most powerful institution in the Western hemisphere over centuries - the Catholic Church, so is the coding of violence in collective terms primarily in the interest of conflict elites as well as mass media and many national governments, sub-state and transnational actors. Unless an already observable gradual transformation of political systems (democratisation, liberalisation, inclusive governance based on accessibility, participation and quality information flow, e.g. in the form of developed

educational systems)⁶² develops far enough and spreads onto social fields embedding those actors possessing substantial capital and definition power, “cultures” will continue to clash, “ethnic groups” will fight for their collective supremacy and “religions” will continue to oppose each other or engage in “inter-religious” dialogues and the perception of social reality will continue to be based on reproduced lies.

⁶² Unfortunately, even in Western key societies countervailing tendencies are discernible. The most problematic issue seems to be the current form of economisation of politics, which often links the mechanisms of interest implementation and profit maximisation with elitist structures of governance. In fact, it is my firm belief that the awareness of interest-based rationality and its institutionalisation is an awareness of the inevitable and indeed desirable path of social development, however, it has to be rooted in an institutional system of broad integration impeding tendencies leading to CCN-based dynamics.

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9. Appendix

9.1. Abstracts

ENGLISH

It is commonly held in the contemporary literature on conflict studies that intense violent social conflicts implicitly presuppose the existence of antagonistic, homogenous collective entities, such as ethnic groups. While in-depth research and empirical evidence suggest more complex actor-based dynamics underlying the emergence of conflicts and social cleavages, the dominant public perception nonetheless operates with paradigms of collective violence. Instead of uncritically replicating this perspective, I present a comprehensive model of emerging large-scale violence that transcends the illusion of group conflict and emphasises the role of particular interest-based dynamics retrospectively framed in ethnic terms. I critically approach what is generally being considered as “facts” or “evidence” concerning large-group identities and beliefs, unveiling much of the descriptive work as rather ideological doctrines than essential core characteristics or values, making individuals allegedly capable of killing and dying for. Accepted variables of scientific analysis such as many claims associated with ethnicity are being deconstructed, revealing their dynamic and functional character in coding social reality. The significance of understanding the underlying complexities is being confirmed by new opportunities for conflict management, resulting from the disclosure of power-related mechanisms of interest implementation, legitimisation and mobilisation. Based on Pierre Bourdieu’s *Theory of Practice* I illustrate the fundamental aspects of the outlined model, supported by the examination of numerous cases studies. The internal logic and structure resulting from the present qualitative research leads to the conclusion, that a rational and comprehensive understanding of violent conflicts through the subsequent practice may directly affect the reality of the conflict in a constructive way, creating new possibilities for its transformation. Indeed, the results confirm that there is a mutually reinforcing bi-directional causality between antagonistic group identities and massive violence: While collective identities are the rhetorical argumentation of central actors concealing their interests, instigated violence leads to the activation and crystallisation of identities and its own escalation. The results also show that cognitive structures inscribed in the habitus shape the practice of conflict management and that a gradual implementation and institutionalisation of this rational approach may significantly increase the efficiency of interventions and conflict resolution mechanisms.

In der gegenwärtigen Literatur zur Konfliktforschung wird häufig angenommen, dass intensive gewaltsame Gesellschaftskonflikte implizit die Existenz von antagonistischen, gleichförmigen kollektiven Entitäten, wie zum Beispiel ethnischen Gruppen, voraussetzen. Wenngleich tiefgründige Forschung und empirische Indizien auf komplexere akteursbezogene Dynamiken hindeuten, bedient sich die dominante öffentliche Wahrnehmung nichtsdestotrotz Paradigma kollektiver Gewalt. Anstatt diese Perspektive unkritisch zu replizieren, präsentiere ich ein umfassendes Modell aufkommender Massengewalt, das die Illusion von Gruppenkonflikten überwindet und die Rolle einzelner interessenbezogener Dynamiken betont, welche nachträglich in ethnischen Begriffen formuliert werden. Ich wende mich kritisch dem zu, was allgemein als "Tatsachen" oder "Beweise" hinsichtlich der Identitäten und Überzeugungen von Gruppen gehandhabt wird, einen großen Teil der scheinbar deskriptiven Ansätze als vielmehr ideologische Doktrinen denn bezeichnende Charakteristika und Werte enthüllend, welche vermeintlich Individuen motivieren dafür zu töten und zu sterben. Anerkannte Variablen wissenschaftlicher Analyse, wie beispielsweise viele mit Ethnizität verbundene Behauptungen, werden dekonstruiert, ihren funktionalen Charakter im Kodieren sozialer Wirklichkeit aufdeckend. Die Bedeutung des Verständnisses der zugrunde liegenden Komplexität wird von neuen Möglichkeiten des Konfliktmanagement bestätigt, welche sich aus dem Offenlegen machbezogener Mechanismen von Interessensumsetzung, Legitimierung und Mobilisierung ergeben. Ausgehend von Pierre Bourdieus *Theorie der Praxis* stelle ich die grundlegenden Aspekte des skizzierten Modells dar, untermauert durch die Untersuchung zahlreicher Fallbeispiele. Die sich aus der vorliegenden qualitativen Forschung ergebende interne Logik und Struktur führt zu dem Schluss, dass ein rationales und umfassendes Verständnis gewaltsamer Konflikte sich durch die anschließende Praxis direkt auf die Wirklichkeit des Konfliktes auf konstruktive Art auswirken kann, neue Möglichkeiten der Konflikttransformation schaffend. In der Tat, die Ergebnisse bestätigen, dass es eine sich gegenseitig verstärkende bidirektionale Kausalverbindung zwischen antagonistischen Gruppenidentitäten und massiver Gewalt gibt: Während kollektive Identitäten die rhetorische Argumentation zentraler Akteure darstellen, die ihre Interessen verschleiern, führt angestiftete Gewalt zur Aktivierung und Kristallisierung der Identitäten sowie ihrer eigenen Eskalation. Die Ergebnisse zeigen weiters, dass die im Habitus eingeschriebenen kognitiven Strukturen die Praxis des Konfliktmanagements formen, und dass eine allmähliche Implementierung und Institutionalisierung des vorliegenden rationalen Ansatzes die Effizienz von Interventionen und Mechanismen zur Konfliktlösung bedeutend steigern könnte.

9.2. About the author (curriculum vitae)

MAXIMILIAN M. MEDUNA

PERSONAL DETAILS

date of birth	28/10/1985
place of birth	Vienna, Austria
Nationality	Austrian
Gender	Male

EDUCATION

1992-1996	Elementary school <i>PVS Waldkloster</i>
1996-2004	Secondary school Gymnasium <i>Theresianische Akademie</i> , Vienna Polish school <i>Jan III Sobieski</i> , Kalksburg
2004-2010	University of Vienna, Austria Studies of Political Science |&| Cultural- and Social Anthropology
2007/8	University of Granada, Spain Studies of International and European Law |&| Spanish language within the ERASMUS exchange programme (September - February)
2010 Feb-May	Pushkin State Institute, Moscow, Russian Federation

RELEVANT WORK EXPERIENCE & ACTIVITIES

2007 Feb, Mar	Internship at the Institute for Peace Support and Conflict Management (IFK), Austrian National Defence Academy, Vienna
2009-2010	Board of the Academic Forum for Foreign Affairs (AFA) Vienna
2010-	Freelancer for the Academic Forum for Foreign Affairs (AFA)
2008|09|10 Aug	Scholarship holder and participant at the European Forum Alpbach
2010 Aug	Seminar assistant at the European Forum Alpbach (Security Concepts)