INTRODUCTION
*The Social (Re)production of Diversity**

GIACOMO ORSINI
Ghent University

Today as in the past, the (re)production of alterity or, put more simply, diversity, is central to the structuring of social, political, economic and cultural relations among individuals, groups and communities.[1] The mobilisation of differences and/or similarities shapes the perception and experience of encounters and clashes with a more or less distant 'other(s).'[2]

Importantly, otherness results from 'a discursive process by which a dominant in-group […] constructs one of many dominated out-groups by stigmatizing […] real or imagined differences.'[3] As such, in defining the limits of membership, the social reproduction of diversity is constituent to the construction of sameness, that is, of perceived and experienced 'in-group homogeneity.'[4]

Consequent to this mobilisation of diversity and similarity 'different subjects are formed[:] hegemonic subjects – that is, subjects in powerful social positions as well as those subjugated to these powerful conditions.'[5] This means that the act of 'othering' – as the process through which one or more groups demarcate what is different and, potentially, unacceptable against what is similar and, thus, acceptable[6] – produces

---

* The present thematic section of Cromohs is based upon work from COST Action CA18140 'People in Motion: Entangled Histories of Displacement across the Mediterranean' (PIMo) and the panel 'Discussing Otherness/Sameness Across the Mediterranean. (Maritime) Methodologies on the Unsettling Subject' organised for the first PIMo annual conference held at the Biblioteca Riccardiana in Florence, on February 13 and 14, 2020.

[1] EMILE DURKHEIM, *The Division of Labour in Society* (New York: Free Press, 1997); FRED DERVIN, 'Cultural Identity, Representation and Othering,' in *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Intercultural Communication 2*, ed. JANE JACKSON (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 181–94; JOHN SCOTT, *Conceptualising the Social World: Principles of Sociological Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[2] GERARD DELANTY, 'Cultural Diversity, Democracy and the Prospects of Cosmopolitanism: A Theory of Cultural Encounters,' *The British Journal of Sociology* 62, no. 4 (2011): 633–56.

[3] JEAN-FRANÇOIS STASZAK, 'Other/Otherness,' in *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, eds ROB KITCHIN and NIGEL THRIFT (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2009), 43–44.

[4] LAURA COSTELLOE, 'Discourses of Sameness: Expressions of Nationalism in Newspaper Discourse on French Urban Violence in 2005,' *Discourse & Society* 25, no. 3 (2014): 315–40, see 316.

[5] OSCAR THOMAS-OLALDE and ASTRIDE VELHO, 'Othering and its Effects – Exploring the Concept,' in *Writing Postcolonial Histories of Intercultural Education 2*, eds HEIKE NIEDRIG and CHRISTIAN YDESEN (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2011), 27–51, see 27.

[6] GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK, 'The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives,' *History and Theory* 24, no. 3 (1985): 247–72.

inclusion and exclusion as it is inscribed within the everyday (re)distribution of power in society.[7]

Across different geographical scales and depending on the contextual hierarchical relations, through history selected groups of people have come to be represented as (dangerous) 'others.' Through their portrayal and treatment as strangers to most people's everyday life, these out-groups and the cultural, economic, social and political mores ascribed to them have often been marginalised if not expelled from mainstream society.[8]

Accordingly, physical and non-physical boundaries of difference and similarity are not fixed. On the contrary, lines of exclusion and incorporation are context-dependent since they are generated and/or transformed through space and time on the basis of specific political, economic, social and cultural configurations.[9]

In ancient Greece, the derogative image of the Barbarian was employed to mark the difference between the urbanised Greek and the 'uncivilised' non-Greek world.[10] A very similar understanding of the term was later mobilised by the Romans to name those living on the other side of the expanding frontiers of the Roman Empire. Yet, with 'the consolidation of Christian kingdoms […] the "new barbarians" came to signify […] also non-Christian[s]."[11]

During colonialism, Europe's self-perception expanded to (re)define its boundaries beyond Christendom. Through exploration first, colonial exploitation and imperialism later, those views on the 'orientalised other'[12] which originated in the classical texts, the Bible or travellers' tales were supplanted and/or complemented with other and more elaborate descriptions.[13]

For instance, the systemic collection of anthropological knowledge[14] on the colonised and the consequent deployment of racism(s)[15] in the governance of the

---

[7] KEN PLUMMER, '"Whose Side Are We On?" Revisited: Narrative Power, Narrative Inequality, and a Politics of Narrative Humanity', *Symbolic Interaction* 43, no. 1 (2020): 46–71.
[8] MICHAEL TAUSSIG, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (Oxon: Routledge, 2017); DAMIAN BREEN and NASAR MEER, 'Securing Whiteness?: Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the Securitization of Muslims in Education,' *Identities* 26, no. 5 (2019): 595–613.
[9] GIACOMO ORSINI, ANDREW CANESSA, and LUIS MARTINEZ, 'Fixed Lines, Permanent Transitions. International Borders, Cross-Border Communities and the Transforming Experience of Otherness,' *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 34, no. 3 (2019): 361–76.
[10] FRANÇOIS HARTOG, *The Mirror of Herodotus: The Representation of the Other in the Writing of the Other in the Writing of History* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1988).
[11] LINDA KALJUNDI, 'Waiting for the Barbarians: Reconstruction of Otherness in the Saxon Missionary and Crusading Chronicles, 11th–13th Centuries,' *The Medieval Chronicle* 5 (2008): 113–27.
[12] EDWARD SAID, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).
[13] JOHN REX, 'Racism and the Structure of Colonial Societies,' in *Racism and Colonialism. Essays on Ideology and Social Structure*, ed. ROBERT ROOS (Dordrecht: Springer, 1982), 199–218.
[14] DIANE LEWIS, 'Anthropology and Colonialism,' *Current Anthropology* 14, no. 5 (1973): 581–602; GEORGE STOCKING, *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1968).
[15] JULIAN GO, '"Racism" and Colonialism: Meanings of Difference and Ruling Practices in America's Pacific Empire,' *Qualitative Sociology* 27, no. 1 (2004): 35–58.

colonies developed within the Enlightenment and further cemented the juxtaposition between a rational, industrious Europe – whose apical figure was embodied in the white upper-middle class English gentleman[16] – and the irrational, lazy and non-white/European 'other.'[17]

With decolonisation, new national and ethnic identities had to be forged in the newly 'liberated' territories.[18] Importantly, as the dismantling of colonial empires took place, racist public discourse(s) became increasingly marginalised and silenced, with several societies coming to be (projected as) increasingly multicultural.[19] This explains why new understandings of otherness – for example, ethnicity – came to be utilised to re-define and re-organise sameness and diversity, inclusion and exclusion.[20]

The purpose of this small selection of contributions is to diachronically focus on the transforming and somehow mobile understanding of otherness and sameness in some key European societies. The objective is to offer a multidisciplinary –historical and sociological – view on the multiple ways in which cultural, political, social and economic alterity is generated within specific institutional and societal settings.

The first essay, by Dana Caciur, deals with the sixteenth-century borderland of Venetian Dalmatia, separating (but also connecting) the Serenissima and the Ottoman Empire. By focusing on the middle of the century and, more precisely, on the period between 1549 and 1570, the author provides an in-depth view on two trans-border and very mobile out-groups of the time: the Uskoks and the Morlachs.

By discussing the records on these populations present in the state archives of Venice and Zadar, the article offers us a detailed view of how these two minorities were defined – and thus constructed – by the Venetian authorities. In so doing, Caciur offers us the external description of the ethnicity of the Morlachs and the Uskoks attributed to them by the most powerful actors in society, the Venetian officials.[21]

---

[16] ANNE MCCLINTOCK, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013).

[17] STUART HALL, 'The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power,' in *Formations of Modernity*, eds STUART HALL and BRAM GIEBEN (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 275–331; GIACOMO ORSINI et al., 'Institutional Racism Within the Securitization of Migration: The Case of Family Reunification in Belgium,' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (2021): 1–20.

[18] PARTHA CHATTERJEE, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); DAVID SCOTT, 'Colonial Governmentality,' in *Anthropologies of Modernity: Foucault, Governmentality, and Life Politics*, ed. JONATHAN XAVIER INDA (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 23–49.

[19] GAIL LEWIS, 'Unsafe Travel: Experiencing Intersectionality and Feminist Displacements,' *Signs* 38, no. 4 (2013): 869–92; EMILIA ROIG, 'Uttering "Race" in Colorblind France and Post-racial Germany,' in *Rassismuskritik und Widerstandsformen*, eds KARIM FEREIDOONI and MERAL EL (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2016), 613–27.

[20] PETER KIVISTO, 'We Really Are All Multiculturalists Now,' *The Sociological Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (2012): 1–24.

[21] VIVIAN IBRAHIM, 'Ethnicity,' in *The Routledge Companion to Race and Ethnicity*, eds STEPHEN M. CALIENDO and CHARLTON D. MCILWAIN (London: Routledge, 2020), 12–21.

Importantly, by combining different sources, the author is also able to bring to the surface the extent to which both 'out-groups' of unsettled subjects[22] strategically deployed this exogenous cultural/ethnic identity. Indeed, this ascribed membership was pivotal to allowing the Morlachs access to the rights and opportunities made available by the Venetian masters.

Similar to contemporary multicultural settings where ethnicity is utilised by minority groups to advance claims in society,[23] for example, for the recognition of specific cultural and/or religious rights, the Morlachs were granted a special status within the Serenissima and protection from the Uskoks. Yet, the Morlachs did not hesitate to join the Uskoks in their territories to escape the Venetian justice system, and/or to share the loot of cross-border criminal activities, hence unveiling the Morlachs' – but also the Uskoks' – instrumental use of their attributed ethnicity.[24]

With the following essay by David Do Paço the focus moves to the eighteenth century. Through the analysis of 31 German cookbooks of the time, the author critically engages with the use and conceptualisation of 'foreignness' in social history. In particular, he follows Cerrutti's approach to move away from understandings of foreignness linked to territoriality and/or nationality and favour a line which concentrates on practices of exclusion/inclusion in early modern societies.

For contemporary food culture, recipes have come to be associated with local territories and communities, so specific dishes often come to be treated as key markers of local, regional or national identities[25] regardless of, for instance, the geographical provenience of the ingredients and the cooking techniques utilised to prepare them.[26] As for the German-written cookbooks circulating in the Holy Roman Empire which are considered by Do Paço, the mention of food, cooking techniques and manners as foreign – and thus, somehow diverse – was not fixed. On the contrary, the different accounts of what was considered to be local food reveal the extent to which foreignness was situational rather than ubiquitous.[27]

Due to changes in the publishing industry, over the first half of the century popular cumulative collections were replaced by volumes which linked dishes to specific social practices and norms, such as the order of serving. Through this process,

---

[22] PATRICIA FUMERTON, *Unsettled: The Culture of Mobility and the Working Poor in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

[23] WILL KYMLICKA, 'The Three Lives of Multiculturalism,' in *Revisiting Multiculturalism in Canada*, eds SHIBAO GUO and LLOYD WONG (Rotterdam: Brill Sense, 2015), 15–35.

[24] FREDRIK BARTH, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organisation of Cultural Difference* (London: Waveland Press, 1969); ABNER COHEN, *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Migrants in Yoruba Towns* (London: Routledge, 1969).

[25] JOANA A. PELLERANO and VIVIANE RIEGEL, 'Food and Cultural Omnivorism: A Reflexive Discussion on Otherness, Interculturality and Cosmopolitanism,' *International Review of Social Research* 7, no. 1 (2017): 13–21.

[26] SIMONA STANO, 'Lost in Translation: Food, Identity and Otherness,' *Semiotica* 2016, no. 211 (2016): 81–104.

[27] JONATAN KURZWELLY, 'Being German, Paraguayan and Germanino: Exploring the Relation Between Social and Personal Identity,' *Identity* 19, no. 2 (2019): 144–56.

the definition of foreign food and recipes within the Holy Empire transformed, to differ not only between regions, but also based on very practical considerations. For instance, locality/nativeness came to overlap with the availability of a given product, rather than the actual place where that specific food was produced.[28]

The definition of what was to be included in local cuisine was thus marked by a process of incorporation or assimilation which originated in the very practicalities necessary to put together a specific dish and recipe. Here, foreignness had little to do with territorial origin and/or authenticity: the inclusion of dishes in the local, regional or national cuisine depended on the political economy of their production and consumption.[29]

Finally, the last contribution of this thematic issue concentrates on the twentieth-century process of the formation of a national identity in a former European colony: Gibraltar. Based on about 400 oral history interviews collected from people of a very wide age range living on both sides of the frontier, the authors disentangle the locals' experiences of the transforming local cross-border relations.

Giacomo Orsini, Andrew Canessa, and Luis Martinez concentrate on the border as a key experienced and perceived barrier which allows Gibraltarians to instrumentally project themselves as a distinct national community. In practice, the authors offer us a microhistorical perspective[30] on major geopolitical transformations – the partial decolonisation of the enclave and the closure of the local land border with Spain – and their impact on the everyday cross-border social, cultural, political and economic life in the area. The overarching goal is to cast light on how these changes came to transform the locals' self-perception both in continuity and in contrast with their neighbours from across the frontier.

The case of the tiny British colony – today, formally, a British Overseas Territory – is extremely emblematic for analyses of the construction of national/ethnic identities in (post)colonial settings.[31] As colonial subjects, over the centuries the Gibraltarians – a civilian population made up of people of Genoese, Spanish, Maltese, Portuguese, Sindhi, Sephardic, British and Moroccan descent[32] – had been very much aware of their subaltern position in the colonial society of the time. Accordingly, also due to the porosity of the local border, the Gibraltarians – many of whom had a Spanish parent

[28] ROBERT FEAGAN, 'The Place of Food: Mapping Out the "Local" in Local Food Systems', *Progress in Human Geography* 31, no. 1 (2007): 23–42.

[29] BEN FINE, 'Towards a Political Economy of Food,' *Review of International Political Economy* 1, no. 3 (1994): 519–45.

[30] GEERTJE BOSCHMA et al., 'Oral History Research,' in *Capturing Nursing History: A Guide to Historical Methods in Research*, eds SANDRA B. LEWENSON and ELEANOR KROHON HERRMANN (New York: Springer, 2008), 79–98.

[31] JOHN HUTCHINSON, 'Ethnicity and Modern Nations,' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23, no. 4 (2000), 651–69.

[32] LUIS MARTINEZ DEL CAMPO, ANDREW CANESSA and GIACOMO ORSINI, 'A New British Subject: The Creation of a Common Ethnicity in Gibraltar,' in *Bordering on Britishness: National Identity in Gibraltar from the Spanish Civil War to Brexit*, ed. ANDREW CANESSA (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 121–41.

– tended to identify themselves with the Spanish culture, and Spanish was by far the most widely spoken language in the enclave. Yet, following Franco's closure of the land border, the inhabitants of Gibraltar came to progressively reject anything Spanish. Now their identification with the colonisers is such that they often claim to be 'more British than the British.'[33]

As is evident in the three cases approached in this issue, the mobilisation of tangible and intangible boundaries of difference is central to demarcating 'the parameters within which identities are conceived, perceived, perpetuated and reshaped.'[34] Importantly, these boundaries are never fixed as they instead move and/or appear and disappear within or without any given society depending on the contextual power relations between individuals, groups and communities.

The cases of the Morlachs and the Uskoks of Venetian Dalmatia, the eighteenth-century German cookbooks of the Holy Empire, and border relations in the Gibraltar area expose the arbitrariness of otherness and sameness.[35] Alterity, foreignness and diversity do not necessarily originate from actual, predetermined or somehow ancestral cultural differences.

On the contrary, otherness is fictional as it responds to an instrumental/strategic 'social process of exclusion and incorporation'[36] to (re)distribute and/or preserve privilege and disadvantage in society.

Interestingly, therefore, the study of cultural/ethnic difference does not tell us much about actual cultural/ethnic diversity or similarity. Yet, investigating how otherness originates and operates in society can reveal hegemonic practices and groups, as well as the strategies that subaltern individuals, groups and communities can undertake to resist them.[37]

---

[33] ANDREW CANESSA, *Bordering on Britishness. National Identity in Gibraltar from the Spanish Civil War to Brexit* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 1.

[34] DAVID NEWMAN, 'On Borders and Power: A Theoretical Framework,' *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 18, no. 1 (2003): 15.

[35] LINDA COLLEY, 'Britishness and Otherness: An Argument,' *The Journal of British Studies* 31, no. 4 (1992): 309–29.

[36] FREDRIK BARTH, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organisation of Cultural Difference* (London: Waveland Press, 1969), 9–10.

[37] MUSTAPHA KAMAL PASHA, 'Islam, "Soft" Orientalism and Hegemony: A Gramscian Rereading,' *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 8, no. 4 (2005): 543–58; VLAD-PETRE GLĂVEANU, 'What Differences make a Difference? A Discussion of Hegemony, Resistance and Representation,' *Papers on Social Representations* 18, no. 2 (2009): 1–22.