Structure Formation in World Society
The *Eigenstructures* of World Society and the Regional Cultures of the World

I Introduction: *Eigenstructures* of World Society

World society is the only societal system which presently exists in the world. This statement formulates a highly improbable hypothesis. First of all one will ask questions about the concept of society. Is it not true that the concept of society has primarily been conceived by looking to small social systems comprising a few hundred or at most a few thousand members? How can we apply the same concept to tribal social systems as well as to a potential world society? One part of the answer will point to the concept of communication and to connectedness. Society is based on communications as its most elementary events. Communications are connected to other communications and the historical limits of connectivity seem to function as the boundaries of society. Another important part of the answer is to be found in the tradition of sociological systems theory established by Talcott Parsons and Niklas Luhmann. Parsons as well as Luhmann came close in their understanding of society to the Aristotelian tradition: Society is understood as the highest order social system which encloses all relevant social structures and processes into its purview. What distinguishes society from other social systems in this understanding is "self-sufficiency".[1] If one applies the concept of self-sufficiency to the contemporary situation there are good reasons to be found that only

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[1] Luhmann 1997;Parsons 1961b;Parsons 1966;Parsons 1971. For a more detailed argument which concentrates on the significant interpretive differences between Parsons and Luhmann cf. Stichweh 2005f.

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world society can be conceived to be a sufficiently autonomous social entity to be called a self-sufficient social system.[2]

In historical terms we have to deal with a highly unusual circumstance. The history of human societies was always characterized by the coexistence of at least hundreds, or more probably thousands of societies which had some contacts with one another, but were mainly independent from one another. In this sense they were closed towards one another. The same is true of the civilizational empires of the last three- to four-thousand years which should be conceived as self-sufficient societies with occasional exchanges and occasional contacts with other societies. Besides these civilizational empires (Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, Hellenistic Greece) there again existed thousands of small and local societies which were only loosely coupled to the civilizational empires. Insofar it can be said that the rise of the European-Atlantic societal system, since approximately the fifteenth century, and the incorporation of the whole of the remaining world into this system, which was never unified in a political sense[3], brings about a singularity into the history of human societies. Never before in human history there was only one societal system on earth.

Global inequality, global conflict and national and international wars have to be analyzed as structures of world society. Their prominence and frequency are not arguments against world society. Instead they have to be understood as formative moments of a global societal system.[4] Although it still bears significant character-

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[2] As is well known Parsons himself did not come to this conclusion but there are numerous caveats in his writings which consider the possibility of a world society. See for example Parsons 1961a, Fn. 14, p. 44.

[3] The permanent absence of political unification is the criterion for the existence of a world-system Immanuel Wallerstein added to the discussion, Wallerstein 1974.

[4] There is an interesting story in a book by two Australian film makers about the discovery of the population of the highlands of New Guinea in the 1930s (these highlands had thought to be uninhabited until then). When the authors of the book interviewed the highlanders in the 1960s about their experience of *first contact,* many of these now old men were decorated with their war medals from Australia. That is only a few years after having had their first encounter

istics of its Western origin, the system of world society as it is today absorbed the multiplicity of empires and societies from the ancient and medieval world.

The question this paper will focus on is how this unique system of society succeeds in this improbable achievement: absorbing differences and reconstituting conflict lines. Looking for an answer there are two positions prominent in the present literature on globalization. The first of these two analytical options conceives world society as a unifying force which systematically reduces behavioral and cultural differences. This thesis has sometimes been called McDonaldization[5], a name which already seems to be dated as it comes from a time a few years ago when McDonald was perceived to be a much more potent marketing machine than it is now. A second proposal postulates the conservation and maintenance of pre-existing diversity in the system of world society. This thesis is best known under the title of "multiple modernities" and it is closely connected to the writings of Shmuel N. Eisenstadt.[6] Both of these theories are probably wrong as they postulate too much continuity in the emergence of world society. This continuity is either caused by world society being a homogenizing force which always neutralizes historical differences or it is guaranteed by the maintenance and extension of pre-existing cultural differences.

This paper will try to establish a third, completely different argument. It will look to structural patterns germane to world society. Insofar as these are new structural patterns it points to discontinuities and not to continuities. The structural patterns in question I call *Eigenstructures* of world society thereby making use of a term well established in mathematics but not yet in sociology. *Eigenstructures* reproduce pre-existent cultural diversity and push it back at

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with a world unknown to them until now they had been involved as soldiers for the state of Australia in World War II, Connolly and Anderson 1988.
[5] Ritzer 1993 and Ritzer 2002.
[6] Eisenstadt 2000.

the same time, creating new social and cultural patterns of their own.

This argument is based on a cumulative model of social structure which does not describe social change as a substitution of new structures in place of old structures. Instead it hypothesizes plural levels of structure formation in social systems which means that new structures overlay old structures but do no extinguish them. They rather reduce the informational relevance and the frequency of activation of the structures they push back over very long stretches of historical time.[7]

The following argument will make it clear that the *Eigenstructures* of world society are not to be seen as recent inventions. Some of them are structural patterns going back to antiquity and to the European Middle Ages. But this only points once more to the fact that world society itself is a system with a long history of at least five- to six-hundred years. And these *Eigenstructures* are related to World Society via reciprocal intensifications. They advance the emergence of world society to the degree they themselves are articulated. On the other hand they are privileged by the emerging system of world society as structural patterns compatible with it.

II Differentiation of Function Systems

The first and probably most important candidate on my list of *Eigenstructures* is the function system. World Society does not arise via the encounter and conflict of the great civilizations of the world – this last point seems to be the position of Samuel Huntington[8] - as it does arise via the emergence of functional differentiation. By this is meant that thematically specialized function systems come about as global communication complexes. Examples for global

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[7] Cf. some remarks on a cumulative model of social structure in Stichweh 1994b.
[8] Huntington 1997.

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function systems are the world economy or world science or world law or finally world literature. All of these global systems somehow undermine the autonomy of the regional cultures of the world without attacking these cultures directly. This offers a good illustration of how a new structural pattern overlays an older one without these two layers necessarily coming into conflict with one another.

An interesting contemporary case study of this could be the ongoing integration of the Islamic economy into the world economy. On the one hand, there is a corpus of Islamic economic law (Shari`ah Law) which is incompatible with many practices considered normal in the Western world: Sale of alcohol; pork-related products; conventional financial services (banking, insurance); entertainment (hotels, casinos/gambling, cinema, pornography); tobacco manufacturing; defense and weapons companies. On the other hand, the last few years saw numerous unification tendencies based on instruments which try to enhance the comparability between different Islamic investments and between Islamic and non-Islamic investments. Among these instruments one can count the implementation of numerous "Islamic Market Indexes" by Dowjones, indexes which only list securities compatible with Shari`ah Law (this compatibility is certified by a council of Islamic scholars) and which then allows one to compare investments into these securities with alternative investments.[9] Another important instrument is the "Islamic Financial Services Board" founded in Malaysia in 2002 which tries to control the fragmentation of financial services in the Islamic countries by creating unified standards for Islamic banking and thereby building up a critical mass of uncontroversial financial products with a global reach.[10] An interesting development is to be seen in the fact that meanwhile even medium scale German cities issue bonds which are shaped according to Islamic standards and which in this way are addressed to Islamic investors. All these in-

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[9] Cf. http://www.djindexes.com.
[10] Cf. http://www.ifsb.org.

stitutions are characterized by a highly technical character specific of financial markets, and therefore they can coexist without obvious collisions with ideological languages which try to postulate rigid barriers between the Islamic and the Western world. And furthermore these developments document the ability of the economy to internalize most heterogeneous value patterns (e.g. ecological values, Islamic values) as long as a measure can be found which compares the results obtained in an evaluative language specific for the economic function system.

The same force attributed here to the economy as a global function system can be seen in all the other function systems of modern society. Obviously, there exists a significant number of them: Religion, law, the world polity, science, the arts, the global system of intimate relations and families, education, the global health system, the sports, mass media, tourism.[11] They all are not only structures differentiating a certain functional aspect of communication. Additionally all of them are producers of global semantics. And as such they do not only realize *Eigenstructures* of world society but are also constituting *Eigencultures* of the function systems which can in no way be reduced to the traditional regional cultures of the world. Looking again to the economy *brands* are an interesting aspect of such a global *Eigenculture* of a function system and they are a remarkable case of penetrating most improbable regions of the world.[12]

How and why acquire these function systems the globalizing impetus characteristic of them. The most important feature seems to be the *binary codes* on which function systems are based. By this I mean binary distinctions such as *truth/falsity* (science), *to pay/not to pay* (economy), *powerful/subject to power* (polity) and other

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[11] See for a short historical overview of the differentiation of function systems and for different stages in this process Stichweh 2005a.

[12] Cf. Friedman 1994 on Africa and the constitution of local identities via the famous brands of French *haute couture* (pp. 105-8).

such codes which are universal mechanisms of information processing by which nearly everything in the world can be classified according to a specific functional point of view.[13] From the perspective of such a binary code there is no reason to be seen why it should be of only national or regional significance. Binary codes have no endogenous reasons for accepting spatial or territorial restrictions on their relevance. Such restrictions if they occur always are constraints deriving from the concurrent universal relevance of other binary codes. These binary codes generate a dynamics which always is a global dynamics. The concepts interpreted by the codes are generalized symbols which bring about a disembedding of the respective function from other social contexts. This disembedding can also be described as a kind of purity negating any admixture with points of view coming from other functional points of view.[14] From these arguments one can derive that in a first approximation the theory of world society is nearly identical with the theory of functional differentiation – and this in a double sense: firstly, one can not imagine function systems which do not inherently tend to be global communication complexes; secondly, a system of world society seems to be inconceivable which is not based on the autonomous dynamics of global function systems.

III The Career of Formal Organizations

The second candidate on my list of *Eigenstructures* is the *formal organization* which is an invention which derives from the secular and spiritual organizations of the late middle ages.[15] Historically the formal organization is related to the genesis of the function system. Early functional specifications in stratified societies were prepared in functionally specified corporations. These corporations were allowed to incorporate a principle – horizontal heterogeneity

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[13] Cf. on binary codes Luhmann 1986.
[14] Cf. on disembedding Granovetter 1985; on purity Abbott 1981.
[15] On the genesis of the formal organization Coleman 1990, esp. Ch. 20.

– which was not yet acceptable on the level of primary societal differentiation.[16] Among the early corporations of medieval Europe were monastic orders, universities, incorporated cities, trading companies and guilds of craftsmen.

Even in early modern Europe one could easily observe the globalizing force due to the principle of formal organization. Among the monastic orders the Jesuits are a significant example as they succeeded in a few decades between their foundation in 1540 and 1620 to cover Europe and parts of Asia and the Americas with a dense network of educational and ecclesiastical organizations. The celibate which partially dissolved the link between the members of the order and their families and the free transferability of the personnel of the order (normally they were transferred to another often far distant place every three years) were probably the most important enabling conditions for the global penetration of the Jesuit order.[17]

If one looks at modern organizations one finds similar circumstances as conditions of their relevance for global society. First of all, they are successful in effecting internal transfers of personnel. These internal transfers of personnel allow to neutralize political boundaries which are not so easily crossed by other types of migrants who can not rely on membership status in a global organization.[18] Secondly, organizations are effective machines for the internal transfer of knowledge of which it is often said that global markets for knowledge are very inefficient. In evolutionary economics there exists some evidence for the hypothesis that the inefficiency of knowledge transfers between organizations is the main reason for the rise of the multinational enterprise as a mechanism for the internalization of knowledge transfers.[19] Thirdly, organizations of-

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[16] Cf. on this Stichweh 1991, esp. Ch. II.
[17] Cf. Meier 2000.
[18] Cf. Stichweh 2005d, Ch. 8.
[19] Kogut and Zander 1993;Scaperlanda 1993.

ten combine the global connectedness in a worldwide network of branches with an intensive local situatedness of the individual subsidiary.[20] Today there are many types of global organizations. But what is remarkable in looking at most of them is this compatibility of globality and locality, of global connectedness and local situatedness.

Among the different types of global organizations three should especially be mentioned. There are first of all the so-called IGOs (international governmental organizations) which are the organizational structures in which the thematically specified cooperations of the multiple nation states of the world are realized. There are then the INGOs (international non-governmental organizations) of which there are at least 25.000 today[21] and which together with the IGOs may be described as the basic structures of an emerging world government. And we should mention again the MNEs (multinational enterprises) which represent the most significant case of a function system based in global organizations with a clear functional layout. Looking at this we are referred back to function systems as something being closely interrelated with those organizations with which they share their functional primacy.

IV The Delocalization of Networks

Network is one of the most prominent metaphors of present-day society. It is a remarkable convergence that the term is as well used for the technical infrastructures of societal communication (energy networks, electrical networks)[22] as well as for the structures of communication itself, and that finally the term even entered the self-description of the lifeworld. Members of society without pos-

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[20] Cf. Das 1993.
[21] This number in Boli and Thomas 1997, p. 174.
[22] Cf. Baedeker 1999.

sessing any knowledge of sociology nowadays often describe themselves as doing *networking*.

But in social science the network terminology is a comparably recent phenomenon although networks as social structures are much older than organizations as they do not depend on complicated legal instruments as is the case with organizations. Networks build up and decompose in social space seemingly without preconditions.

For a long time the study of networks was primarily a concern of social anthropologists[23] which were interested in relatively self-contained local communities. Communities of Norwegian fisherman were a characteristic subject of study.[24] But, of course, in looking back in history you will find networks in kinship, friendship and patron-client-relations. On the other hand networks seem to be a dramatic case of a social form which only finds its adequate context of expansion in world society. Which are the reasons for this elective affinity between networks and world society?

First of all, networks are based on abstracting completely from the material content of the social relations going into them. Any kind of entity and that means very heterogeneous entities can be connected via networks. This distinguishes networks from autopoietic social systems which depend on homogenized elements by which they constitute themselves and it distinguishes networks from function systems which are autopoietic systems, of course.[25] But a network can function as the material infrastructure of an autopoietic system and of many other types of social relations, too. The abstract character of networks is an important enabling condition for the very heterogeneous patterns of system formation in contemporary society. For example networks can be indifferent towards the

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[23] Historians who are much more interested in persons do *prosopography* instead.
[24] Barnes 1954.
[25] Cf. on autopoietic social systems Luhmann 1984.

distinction of personal and impersonal social relations which is so characteristic of and innovative in modern society in other respects.

A second important point regards individualization. Individual personalities must have the freedom to enter into network relations without being unnecessarily hindered by social controls and they must have the freedom to be content with *weak ties*.[26] The social acceptability of weak ties is essential for the potential global extension of network relations. Only on the basis of weak ties the extensive personal networks of 1000-1500 acquaintances which are supposed to be typical of present-day society[27] can be managed by individuals with a limited capacity for information processing. Furthermore networks are lateral and non-hierarchical which is again a circumstance being dependent on modern values and legitimations. Finally networks are evolutionary. That is they are based on point-to-point relations which can be changed locally by continually adding and losing network ties. This can more easily be done with weak ties which you can dissolve quickly than it can be done on the basis of strong ties. All these characteristics seem to establish a strong affinity of networks to global social relations. This is to be seen, too, in the fact that some of the prominent terms of network theory – connectivity, connectedness, interrelatedness – are at the same time core concepts in globalization theory.

The rise and prominence of the social form network changes the stability of boundaries of organizations and the chances of control in organizations. Even organizations have to fit into networks transcending the individual organization. It seems to be characteristic for example of economic organizations today that one condition of their success consists in them understanding that they only can control a small part of the value chain related to their products. A McKinsey study in 1998 found out that the total sales volume of Microsoft – then the biggest enterprise in the world in terms of

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[26] On the concept of "weak tie" Granovetter 1983.
[27] Cf. Wellman 1992; Laumann 1989 even speaks of 2000 to 6000 acquaintances.

market capitalization – only amounted to 4% of the whole business volume related to the core Microsoft products (software and services related to Windows).[28] This need of adaptation to a value chain one only is a part of has to be distinguished from the explicit cooperative ventures agreed by an individual enterprise, although the variety and flexibility in forming alliances is an important part of the adaptation to network structures in modern society. For a global software firm a number of five-hundred to seven-hundred of such explicit cooperative alliances seems to be a characteristic number which may demonstrate that organizational networks have an order of magnitude comparable to the acquaintanceship networks of natural persons. Whereas these cooperative alliances are established on the basis of formal agreements among organizations they are dissolved in a much more informal way. They simply peter out which is one indicator of the informality of the network economy. Resuming these arguments it can be said that business networks offer their participants a good chance of significant influence on markets as long as these participants are willing to accept a certain loss of control potentials.

The interrelationship of networks and world society and the attendant delocalization of networks is most easily seen in the fast growing literature on *small worlds*.[29] Small worlds are so-called "scale-free networks" which are able to incorporate a significant number – even billions - of *knots* or members. Locally they can be characterized as *clusters* of members closely linked with one another. Via some individual members who possess extensive links to addresses outside of the local cluster these clusters open up towards macrosocial environments.[30] From this coupling of local

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[28] Del Vecchio and Trigg 2000.
[29] Cf. on this Kochen 1989; Watts and Strogatz 1998; Barabási 2003, Barabási 2005; Bray 2003.
[30] The term *scale-free* means that the network can not be characterized by a modal number of ties typical for most members; instead there are many members with only a few (local) ties and few members distinguishing themselves by extensive linkages with even far-flung regions of the social world. These few members are the *hubs* of the respective *small world*.

clusters with a certain number of external linkages derives the special capability of small worlds in which even if there is a huge number of members each individual member can be connected to any other member in a small number – around five to six – of steps. From this results the surprise that one can approach precise addresses in distant regions of the social world and that one can do it in fewer steps than one would have surmised.

Regarding world society such an approach towards the network analysis of small worlds does not imply that world society is *one* small world. Such a reductive hypothesis would not allow an adequate picture of the internal and functional differentiation of world society. Instead world society probably consists from a multiplicity of such small worlds (for example: function systems and their subsystems, the internet etc.). Each of these small worlds presumably has millions or even billions of elements (e.g. inclusion addresses, web sites).[31] Regarding the interrelations of these small worlds among one another one should make use of sociological systems theory. Small worlds will then be analyzed as autopoietic systems which can only irritate one another. Furthermore one will look for other types of interference and for structural couplings among small worlds.[32]

V Epistemic Communities and the Globalization of Knowledge

Organizations and networks have to be distinguished from epistemic communities. Epistemic communities are based on strong cognitive and normative commitments, something which organiza-

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[31] Cf. McCue 2002 who makes use of the concept of *sampling* in characterizing the selectivity constitutive for small worlds. Obviously this approach is another way of making allowance for functional differentiation.

[32] *Structural coupling* is again a term from systems theory which takes into account the closure of systems towards one another but points to the possibility that (autonomous) structure formation in a system is influenced by the permanent proximity of the structures of an environmental system. Cf. Luhmann 1993, Ch. 10.

tions do not need as they are based on membership rules and on organizational goals, and something which networks can not achieve as they often consist of informal and weak ties and are too fluid for consolidating strong commitments. Epistemic communities were again to be observed in the history of European society for a number of centuries. The most important types since late medieval Europe were *professional communities* such as clerics, medical doctors and lawyers, and secondly *scientific and disciplinary communities* such as physicists and philologists which only in the 19th-Century society were clearly separated from professional communities.[33]

Often epistemic communities are strongly embedded into the structural requirements of a specific function system. Sometimes they are directed by contravening values. A very interesting contemporary example which illustrates the originality of epistemic communities as an *Eigenstructure* of world society is the global community of Linux developers. In the case of this community it is obvious that it can neither be conceived as an organization or as a network. Furthermore we have to do here with a case in which the autonomy of the epistemic community towards a specific function system (the economy) is well to be seen. On the one hand the community mainly consists of software developers who in their day job work for organizations in the economy.[34] On the other hand they try to develop a product which is understood as a public good, the core of which one therefore tries to withdraw from any possibilities of private appropriation. That is the commitment to Linux is primarily meant to block out any possibilities of private economic usage – and a further observation shows that there is no other function system either which guides this epistemic community. This

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[33] On this separation Stichweh 1994a, esp. Part III, and cf. Haskell 1984b, esp. the essay by Haskell himself on the disinterestedness of professional communities, Haskell 1984a.
[34] In the first years it was characteristic that in their day job they could not do any work on Linux (see Gomes 1999). This has changed since organizations such as IBM massively invest into Linux. On recent transformations in the Linux community, occasioned among others by patent disputes see Lohr 2004.

points to the autonomy of this knowledge system towards the imperatives of all the function systems.

The global inclusion of competent and interested experts into the respective epistemic community goes in the case of Linux and other epistemic communities without saying. And this kind of epistemic community is completely independent from the cultural imperatives of the traditional regional cultures of the world. Epistemic communities therefore well illustrate that tendency in present-day global society which motivates observers to speak of *knowledge society*. By this is meant that in a number of different domains of communication there arise global communities of experts which govern relevant forms of knowledge which are no longer necessarily scientific or academic forms of knowledge. That is the knowledge basis of world society is to be seen in the orthogonality of knowledge itself towards the principle of functional differentiation.[35] Nearly in all function systems important forms of knowledge are to be observed today and never again one of the function systems will be able to claim a societal primacy for the production of knowledge. The epistemic community is insofar that form of societal structure formation which at its beginnings in the European Middle ages was limited to the small number of knowledge systems which gave rise to autonomous professions. Epistemic communities rarely occurred as systematic knowledge was restricted to small domains of societal activity. But in present-day society the epistemic community functions as that form of structure formation which is the best representation of the pluralization and diversification of knowledge in the process of the emergence of world society.

VI World Events as Spatio-temporal Representations of World Society

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[35] Cf. on this hypothesis Stichweh 2004 and Stichweh 2005c.

The world event is our next candidate in the list of significant forms of structure formation which function as *Eigenstructures* of world society. A decisive aspect of its relevance distinguishing it from the other Eigenstructures is the *reflexive constitution of world* by world events. That is world events include descriptions and representations of the world and of world society and then they identify a role for themselves via these reflexive representations.

At least two types of world events have to be distinguished. The first type consists of those events which are *posthoc* identified as world events. Nobody ever plans these events. Only after they have happened historians and other observers retrospectively attribute to them the character of a world historical event. The *French Revolution* is an apt example for this kind of world event. This example illustrates at the same time that the identification of something as an event is an artifact of the respective observers who reduce a long-time process to which a kind of directionality can not necessarily be ascribed to one single historical moment to which they attribute a dramatic historical importance.

But it is not this type of retrospectively identified world historical events which deserves closer attention in our context. Much more important for us are *planned world events* which are tied to a specific place and a specified time. That is they show clearly demarcated spatial and temporal boundaries. Normally they take a few days or at most a few weeks. Often these events are repeated in a certain cycle with fixed intervals – and this happens either at changing or at permanently fixed places. They ensure their status as world events by specializing on a specific subject and by recruiting a global circle of participants relevant for the subject they specialize in. Besides this globally recruited circle of active participants[36] many world events address a global public of (passive) ob-

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[36] It is optimal if this circle of participants includes everyone who bears a global reputation in the subject matter in question.

servers most of which are attained via mass media. This public consists of consumers of the performances of the active participants which are engaged in the system in achievement roles.[37] Even in the production of such a planned world event the reflexive identification of world is very important. The events ascribe to themselves world significance – and they choose names which give an expression to this claim – and they continuously try to validate this by the way the events are organized.

Presumably the *World Exhibitions* which have regularly taken place since 1851 were historically the first example for the second type of world event just described in abstract terms. Looking at the world exhibitions in the 19th and in the early 20th-century there is easily to be seen an achievement which the world exhibitions of the last few decades did not succeed to reproduce. At the early world exhibitions the elites of the different function systems of modern society – politics, science, the economy - really met one another. They had not been able to do this before and this experience made the concept of worldwide interrelations available to them in an unforeseen way. Since 1896 the *Olympic Games* were added as a second successful kind of planned world event. Until today they are unsurpassed in their importance for the differentiation of sports as a 20th-century function system of its own. In the following decades of the 20th-century new examples of world events were invented: summit conferences, world conferences in every functional domain, world championships, trade fairs, the global tours of world stars from different domains (rock stars, the pope etc.)[38], and finally the most recent invention in the catalogue of world events: the terrorist world event which is known to us at least since September 11, 2001.[39] The basic structural feature of all these world

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[37] On the distinction of "achievement roles" and "public roles" cf. Stichweh 2005d and cf. Nadel 1957 and Luhmann 1981.
[38] In this case the whole tour with its spatially and temporally distributed performances functions as one world event. One even has a "never ending tour" (Bob Dylan since 1988).
[39] Cf. Stichweh 2005b.

events is always the same: unification of the world in concentrating performers and observers on one worldwide response focus.[40] And it is easily seen that the enormous pluralization and diversification of world events since the invention of this structural form only a 150 years ago follows the main lines of functional differentiation of world society. From this derives the decline of the world exhibitions which invented the form but today can no longer take account of the global fact of functional differentiation.

VII Markets as Self-similar Social Structures

One may be surprised to find the market on a list of the structures specific to world society. To make this plausible one needs a sociological concept of the market and this has to be a sufficiently abstract concept which thanks to this abstractness is not immediately restricted to economic contexts. One finds a good example of such an abstract concept of markets in Harrison Whites metaphor of the market as a mirror in which the participants of a market observe one another reciprocally.[41] This seems to be a remarkable insight which uncovers the market as a self-contained way of structure formation in society. It is not based on ties (as in networks) nor on norms and rules (as in organizations) nor on the value commitments characteristic of epistemic communities. Instead it only needs the incessant mutual observations of all the participants in a market and the operational consequences of these observations. The commonality of one market then is a presupposition made by these observations. Harrison White furthermore adds the mathematical concept of self-similarity which means an independence of the basic properties of a market from the order of magnitude on which a market operates.[42] That is very small, local social systems and seemingly very big, global systems do not differ from one an-

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[40] The concept of response focus was invented by Erving Goffman (Goffman 1983).
[41] White 1981.
[42] Some scattered but interesting remarks on self-similarity in White 1992, esp. Ch. 1.

other as long as both of them are constituted as markets.[43] This in-difference of constitutive properties of a system towards the order of magnitude or level of social reality on which the system operates is once more a potent force in globalization processes. In such self-similar systems you may easily be able to transit from local to global levels and then go back to a local set of relevances.

VIII Further Forms of Structure Formation in World Society

The list of Eigenstructures can be prolonged and it has to remain an open list as research on this subject is only just beginning and the further history of world society obviously can not be foreseen. I will only mention some candidates. There is first of all the *World War* as a new form of military conflict which first arose in 1914 from a conflict which all participants intended and began as a re-gional event. A world war implies a polarization of the world along the conflict lines which motivates ever more states to enter into this conflict in which they perhaps were not as much interested in the beginning.

Furthermore one may think of the *World Public Sphere* which is an addressee of communications one can invent as an addressee as soon as global mass media are available. By postulating and ad-dressing such a world public sphere one discloses the reach one wants to give to one's own communications.[44]

Finally, one could mention the *World City*, a hypothesis which is to be found in many variants. In a first variant which is close to the typical self-observations of urban and metropolitan settings the

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[43] One implication seems to be that all these markets have a characteristic median number of participants - perhaps around six to eight – which may point to inherent oligopolistic tenden-cies on markets. Another relevant distinction is proposed by Ronald S. Burt: on markets one either establishes oneself as a "player" or one retreats into the "scenery" (Burt 1992). Perhaps this can explain oligopoly.
[44] Cf. Stichweh 2003.

main point is that everything which happens in a (world) city has to be conceived and evaluated from the point of view of its *world-relevance* or cosmopolitan relevance. That is there is always the expectation of the self-transcendence of the local towards world-relevance. World cities which observe themselves from this kind of perspective are probably the best places for the organization of *world events*. Whereas world events are primarily limited in a temporal sense, the world city always functions as a spatially bounded representation of world society.

There is at least a second significant variant of the idea of a world city. This new variant does not look to self-observations and self-descriptions of urban settings. Instead it analyzes world cities as places of the spatial concentration of the communicative *centres* of function systems. In a further regard it then investigates the transnational interconnectedness of these centres as a kind of condensation of world society.[45] This hypothesis favors the classical urban centers of cities such as New York and Tokyo. One can doubt if this is still adequate as today there frequently arise communicative centers in function systems (e.g. Santa Clara County in California which is Silicon Valley) which are not connected to classical urban centers. For world society it may be a more representative statement that it nearly exclusively consists from quasi-urban spaces of an infinite variety[46] and that in relation to this the remaining non-urban spaces (rural spaces, the high mountains) are becoming peripheries of society, unless they are claimed by tourism. It will be very interesting to investigate how these new, quasi-urban spaces[47] reflect the concept of world and to see if they acquire the self-understanding and the organizational capacities to become a place for the organization of world events.

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[45] Sassen 1994 and Sassen 2001.
[46] Cf. on this with the apt title "Stadtland Schweiz" Eisinger and Schneider eds. 2003.
[47] See very interesting on „edge cities" Garreau 1991 and more general on cities and globalization Stichweh 2005e.

IX The Delocalization of Diversity

The catalogue of Eigenstructures of World Society presented in
this paper obviously is a provisional and hypothetical one. All the
cases of structure formation mentioned should be a subject of em-
pirical, historical and conceptual research. From this research may
result a picture which shows how these Eigenstructures are related
towards world society via reciprocal intensification. They become
ever more prominent in the history of world society, and on the
other hand world society can only arise together with their progres-
sive articulation. This makes it plausible that the global social sys-
tem does not at all eliminate the regional cultures of the world via
homogenizing tendencies. Instead it superimposes new levels of
structure formation on traditional and as such regional (national,
local) social structures. These new levels of structure formation
push back – but they do not eliminate – the informational relevance
of regional cultures and they substitute for them new sources of
diversity.

Perhaps the most important insight derived from this is that the
synonymy of diversity and locality which is to be observed as an
implicit or explicit presupposition in most present-day globaliza-
tion literature is not valid at all. Local contexts of the production of
social structure are not the guarantor of social and cultural diver-
sity. Instead all the forms of structure formation we introduced into
our discussion are *producers of diversity* (e.g. the differentiation of
function systems, the multiplication of organizations, the multiple
sampling of the world by small-world networks, the pluralization
of epistemic communities, the functional differentiation of world
events, the multi-level structure of markets etc.). In all these cases
of newly arising processes of production of diversity one will never
experience the diversity to be observed as a local phenomenon. All
those things which are still legitimately called "local" as well as the

repetitivity of "everyday life" [48] as well as certain features of "interaction systems"[49] may possibly be rather homogeneous phenomena. But all the Eigenstructures of world society obviously are production machines of nonlocal diversity.

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[48] Cf. Klüver 1988.
[49] In Goffman's terms „forms of face-to-face life are worn smooth by constant repetition" (Goffman 1983, p.9).

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