

Niklas Völkening

Identity, Commodification and Revolution

Tourism and the Transformation of Society, Politics
and Space in Cuba

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Coverabbildung: Souvenirs featuring the image of Che Guevara amongst other souvenirs with stereotypical Cuban motifs; photographed in Calle San Ignacio, Habana Vieja.

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Preface

This book is the published and slightly revised version of my doctoral thesis, which was accepted for the doctoral degree “Dr. rer. nat.” at the Faculty of Applied Computer Science at the University of Augsburg.

Writing this book has been like a journey – in academic, practical and human terms: a journey into different realities of life, halfway around the globe, and, to some extent, also back to myself. Without the contribution of many people, however, this journey would not have been possible. At this point, I would like to express my deep gratitude to all those who have supported and accompanied me along the way.

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Finally, I am thankful for my family and friends, on whose support I have always been able to rely over the years and who have spurred me on more than once. In particular, I have to thank my parents. They have always encouraged me in both my curiosity about the world and my desire to quench it, and they have instilled in me the perseverance to pursue this desire with tenacity and thoroughness. Special appreciation is due to my partner Laura – thank you for all your motivation, for your everlasting support in every conceivable situation and for your understanding in the face of late nights at the desk.

Summary

In postmodernity, identities are in constant flux and subject to numerous pervasive influences. In the literature, the commodification of identity-forming elements – often occurring in tourism – is described as one such influencing factor, albeit with mostly negative effects on host identities. However, the literature to date has largely neglected societies of the Global South in this regard. Moreover, almost all relevant studies focus on tourism and commodification in Western capitalist systems.

Using Cuba as an example, this volume aims to fill these research gaps, by analysing tourist commodification in a socialist setting in the Global South. Its central research question is how the tourist commodification of the Cuban Revolution affects Cuban identities. The empirical design is based on a deconstructivist framework and employs a mixed-methods approach with a focus on qualitative interviews – analysed using Grounded Theory – complemented by on-site mappings.

The study builds on two main strands of theory. First, it draws on sociological and socio-psychological approaches to identities and the transforming conditions of their formation. Second, it utilises Marxist and human geography perspectives on commodification processes in tourism and their consequences for individuals, societies and identities.

The Cuban Revolution, i. e. the commodity under investigation, has been ongoing since 1959 and represents the constitutive framework of Cuban society in several respects. On the one hand, it is an all-encompassing social and economic system, although it has been under considerable pressure since the collapse of the USSR. On the other hand, many sources describe the Revolution as having been a strong identity-forming resource for many Cubans for a long time. However, radical socioeconomic transformations in recent years – including the rise of tourism – have challenged many long-held certainties in Cuba are at stake.

The results of the study show that tourism has considerable destabilising effects on Cuba's socioeconomic fabric. Moreover, it reveals the alienation of certain population groups from the Revolution, in line with growing criticism of the socialist government, is evident. Nevertheless, the empirical findings contradict the assumption frequently made in the literature that commodification leads to alienation and loss of identity.

Although the tourist commodification of the Revolution evokes very specific (spatial) practices and social spaces, the alienation of many Cubans therefrom cannot be conclusively attributed to this notion; rather, the widespread perception of the Revolution as being dysfunctional, coupled with frustrated hopes in the revolutionary project and resignation in the face of egregious deficiencies in terms of supply and economic development, is responsible for the diminishing identification power of the Revolution.

The commodification of the Revolution in tourism is thus not to be understood as a cause of the diminishing power of identification, as other scholars have suggested, but rather as a symptom of alienation that began earlier. In Particular, those Cubans who feel marginalised and excluded from socio-economic advancement as a result of the liberalisation of recent years often express criticism of the Revolution and the Cuban government. Consequently, many disillusioned Cubans abandon the Revolution in disappointment and, for lack of alternatives, turn to modern anchors for their identities, such as nation, family or religion.

The significance of this research lies in the fact that it considers commodification not only as a trigger for alienation processes, but also demonstrates that it can serve as an indicator of transforming identities and changing socioeconomic realities – which in turn can lead to commodification. To be able to draw such conclusions, however, it is necessary for future studies to analyse commodification processes comprehensively and to explore a wide range of social, economic, political, historical and individual circumstances.

Beyond the analysis of its commodification, this book also provides important insights into the current state of the Cuban Revolution. It shows that the present Cuban system, a hybrid of socialism and capitalism, is widely perceived as flawed and lacking in future potential. Although the social achievements of the Revolution are acknowledged, criticism and calls for further market reforms dominate the attitudes of many Cubans towards the Revolution, over which the state appears to be increasingly losing its interpretive authority – also suggesting the erosion of its hitherto comprehensive power.

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List of Abbreviations

AES	Actually Existing Socialism
CDR	Comités de Defensa de la Revolución (Committees for the Defence of the Revolution)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
COMECON	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
CUC	Peso cubano convertible (Cuban Convertible Peso)
CUP	Peso Cubano (Cuban Peso)
CUPET	Unión Cuba Petróleo (Cuba Oil Union)
ETA	Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (Basque Homeland and Liberty)
FAR	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (Revolutionary Armed Forces)
GAESA	Grupo de Administración Empresarial S. A. (Corporate Management Group S. A.)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDR	German Democratic Republic
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Viruses
IHK	Industrie- und Handelskammer (Chamber of Commerce and Industry)
INTUR	Instituto Nacional de Turismo (National Institute of Tourism)
M-26-7	Movimiento 26 de Julio (26th of July Movement)
ONEI	Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas e Información (National Bureau of Statistics and Information)
PCC	Partido Comunista de Cuba (Communist Party of Cuba)
PPC-O	Partido del Pueblo Cubano – Ortodoxos
S. A.	Sociedad anónima (Public Limited Company)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
URSS	Unión de Repúblicas Socialistas Soviéticas (see: USSR)
US	United States (of America)
US\$	United States Dollar
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UN	United Nations
VAT	Value Added Tax

Formal Remarks

For some sources referred to in this book, the year of publication of the original edition is indicated in square brackets alongside the year of publication of the source used – e. g. (Simmel 2006a [1911]). This additional information can be found in sources where the original year of publication and the year of publication of the edition used are far apart in time or where the year of publication of the original is relevant for the contextual assessment of the source in question. This notation has only been applied where the reference source is a reprint of the original, not a modified edition.

Where the references to two or more authors are indicated in one parenthesis, the authors are listed in alphabetical order. Several works by one author indicated in one parenthesis are arranged in chronological order.

In some cases, direct quotations from non-English sources are included. These are mainly quotations from interviews conducted in Spanish, but also some German and French sources (primarily in the theory chapters). To improve readability, these quotations have been translated into English by the author, with the original – non-English – references being included as footnotes with the reference ‘Original’. Non-English sources have been translated with great care; nevertheless, misinterpretations or mistranslations cannot be ruled out. These are the sole responsibility of the author.

Prologue

In the distance, the silhouette of a white stone tower stands out against the dark night sky of Havana. It rises higher and higher as we approach, until its top can no longer be seen through the window of the taxi. Instead, suddenly, the empty expanse of the Plaza de la Revolución passes by. In front of the tower, a giant marble statue of a man kneels and overlooks the plaza. Additionally, on the buildings opposite, larger-than-life portraits of two men are illuminated. One of them is Che Guevara; of course, I know that, because this portrayal is world-famous. The other man is depicted with a broad-brimmed hat and a long beard, and he spontaneously reminds me of the Saviour – the hat looks like a halo.

“What is this place?” I ask Javier, who drives the taxi. Javier straightens up in his seat but keeps his eyes on the road; he has seen this place a thousand times before. “This is Plaza de la Revolución,” he explains, “one of the most important places in Cuba. Camilo Cienfuegos and Che, whose portraits are mounted on the buildings there, and Jose Marti, whose statue watches over the square, are some of Cuba’s greatest heroes. Every child knows them.” Javier, who was previously so gleeful, almost frolicsome, suddenly seems very serious and a bit solemn.

Later that first night in Cuba, I think about the triptych on Plaza de la Revolución. What had Javier said about the three men, with reverence in his voice? “One formulated the idea of Cuban independence, the other two finally established it. They have made us what we are today.” Javier seemed to be very proud of them.

The next morning, I wander the streets of Habana Vieja, the historic district of Havana. The likenesses of the three men from the previous evening appear to me again that day, but in completely different forms. José Martí watches as a bust in front of every school and many public institutions. Camilo Cienfuegos smiles at me from the just exchanged CUP20 banknotes, but otherwise he remains inconspicuous. Actually, I see the image of Che on almost every street corner: The *Guerrillero Heroico* is flaunted on t-shirts, posters, cigar boxes, leather bags, refrigerator magnets, baseball bats and myriad other souvenirs. But he can also be seen from time to time in propaganda graffiti, faded tattoos and framed pictures above door frames in decaying colonial palaces.

The image of the revolutionaries of the previous night, marked by Javier's awe, is thus becoming increasingly complex and complicated. On the one hand, there is the quasi-religious reverence of the revolutionaries and the Cuban Revolution and the frequent reaffirmation of how important it is for Cuba, while on the other hand, the utilisation of this very Revolution in tourism is omnipresent. How do these contradictions fit together? How can deference for the Revolution and its simultaneous touristic utilisation be explained? What does it mean for Cuban society and its self-image, and what does it mean for the Cubans and their identity, which, according to their own assessments, is so strongly influenced by the Revolution? The contradictions revealed herein constitute the starting point for the research and reflections that are laid out in the following.

1. Identity, Revolution and Tourist Commodification

I don't feel that it is necessary to know exactly what I am. The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning. If you knew when you began a book what you would say at the end, do you think that you would have the courage to write it?

Michel Foucault on identity (1988:9)

In the 21st century, the identities of many people are affected by rapidly accelerating social, economic and ecological shifts. Individuals and collectives alike are required to adapt to these changes, which are occurring on different spatial scales – from global to local – and affecting a wide range of aspects of human life. The contemporary social world is becoming progressively unsteady, with key elements of identities (e.g. community, family, political ideologies) becoming more diverse, complex and fragmented.

Identities are a powerful expression of how individuals and collectives ascribe meaning to themselves and their lives and how they place themselves in the social world around them. Since identities are always based on social relationships (Goffman 1959, 1963; Luhmann 1995; Mead 1970), transformations and shifts in these social relationships inevitably require a relentless reassessment of individual and collective identities. In this regard, society and identity form a mutually constituting and structuring interdependent relationship, which is both expressed and simultaneously influenced by culture and other resources for identities (Jullien 2017). As the discourses, practices and social and spatial arrangements through which identities are lived and formed are versatile, dynamic and power-sensitive (Foucault et al. 2003), identities need to be alterable and, to a certain extent, flexible.

This research rests upon the hypothesis that the increasingly fluid conditions for identity formation are seizing ever more societies and social strata, for instance via emerging capitalist practices, transforming value systems and growing socioeconomic disparities.

Thus, it is assumed that on the regional, national and global scales, the jumbling of socioeconomic conditions of prior social and political orders dissolves former certainties. As a result, postmodernity¹ is accompanied by entrenched social arrangements and corresponding identities of class, nationality, gender, ethnicity, religious belief and so on fragmenting – sometimes perishing in insignificance, sometimes rearranging (Beck 2009; Reckwitz 2019, 2020) – but all with consequences for individual and collective identities (Bauman 1992, 2002; Hall 1987, 2003; Sennett 1998). Hence, the formation of identities is becoming increasingly complex, difficult and sometimes unsettling under postmodern conditions (Bauman 1996, 1997; Giddens 1991a; Keupp et al. 2006).

To reconcile their self-images socially and psychologically with a transformed external sphere, individuals and collectives require new perspectives on their selves, new kinds of explanatory systems and structuring references. In other words, to prevent individuals from despairing and failing at embedding and integrating their selves in a meaningful way in the changing world around them, a re-interpretation of their own position in the social world – of their own identity – is necessary (Keupp et al. 2006:55). While succeeding in this pursuit of meaningfulness can translate into experiences of self-consciousness and of belonging, the aforementioned failures may result in the development of psycho-pathological symptoms. The underlying fundamental changes and distortions leading to identity change, as briefly outlined above, can be observed in various forms and in many places throughout the world.

Socialist Cuba has been undergoing far-reaching and deep transformations for about the past 30 years, following “revolutionary Cuba’s golden age” (Ritter 2010:229) of relative socioeconomic stability during the 1970s and 1980s. Recent years have brought significant and profound changes to the nation’s social and economic structures, whose long-term consequences for individual and collective identities are most uncertain. With the dawn of the post-Castro era, Cuba’s political system is subject to transformation as well, albeit in a much weaker form. In this inquiry, transformations are conceived as comprehensive, radical and path-dependent changes in socioeconomic and political systems (Altwater 1998:593–594), which can be described as ‘systemic’ (Geels 2005; Schneidewind 2013), i. e. shifts in which social, cultural, institutional and technological aspects are intricately interwoven and steadily interact with each other. Among the most notable transformative changes Cuba has experienced over the past three decades are fundamental uncertainties in the wake of the socioeconomic crisis during the *Período Especial* (1990–2005), the death of long-time *Comandante en Jefe* Fidel Castro in 2016, the new constitution of 2019 and the rollercoaster of relations with the United States. In addition, increasing international tourism in Cuba is one of the principal causes of multi-layered socioeconomic transformations (Hingtgen et al. 2015:184;

¹ The concept of postmodernity, and to what extent postmodern societies exist, is discussed extensively in Chapter 2.2.3.

Simoni 2017; Taylor & McGlynn 2009:410); thus, it can be considered accountable for Cuban identities in flux, among several other factors. The Cuban tourism industry, once designated as a coping strategy to overcome the economic crisis following the disintegration of the USSR (Jatar-Hausmann 1999:49; Salinas et al. 2018:222), saw the number of international tourists increase by a factor of 10.1 from 1991 to 2019² and revenue grow by a factor of 6.6 in the same period³. Considering the major socioeconomic and cultural shifts in Cuba addressed previously, the increasing importance of international tourism is both the consequence and the driver of these transformations.

Tourism itself is an arena of struggle for space, power⁴ and identity (Devine 2017:634–635), wherein different actors compete for profound socio-spatial agendas and politics, hence profoundly affecting socioeconomic and cultural relations and, ultimately, identities. Marxist authors particularly trace this influencing effect of tourism back to its almost exclusively capitalist and sometimes neoliberal stance (Fletcher 2011; González Velarde 2020; Harvey 2005; Schilcher 2007) – and the multiple violent practices it entails (Büscher & Fletcher 2017; Devine 2017; Devine & Ojeda 2017). The most basic element of capitalism, in turn, is the commodity (Marx 1990 [1867]:163), which also occupies a crucial role in tourism. Practices and processes of commodification are inseparable from capitalism – and thus from capitalist tourism. In recent years, the commodifying character of tourism and the tourist commodification of the environment, of societies and of culture have been increasingly addressed by scholars in various fields (e.g. Büscher & Fletcher 2017; Hillmer-Pegram 2016; Mostafanezhad 2020; Young & Markham 2020; seminal contributions include those of Cohen 1988; Greenwood 1978 and Nuñez & Lett 1989).

As Foucault (2009:92) notes, commodification processes produce specific social relations and spatial manifestations, and they affect the behaviours and mindsets of individuals and collectives. Thus, commodification ultimately alters identities, for example through commodification, that are firmly anchored in changing social interactions with social and cultural “resources” (Jullien 2017). These “resources” are objects and entities of all kinds that individuals and collectives employ to construct identities – in other words, through which they identify themselves. Among others, these resources may include social, cultural, spiritual or political resources. Some studies hint at a disintegrating effect of tourist commodification for identities (Devine & Ojeda 2017; Greenwood 1978; Halewood & Hannam 2001; Lanfant 1995a; Nagy-Zekmi 2019; Salazar 2012). Hence, Salazar (2012) points out that commodification in tourism often produces essentialist and folkloristic – sometimes stereotypical – representations and imaginaries

² Based on the author’s own calculations with data from ONEI (2020:334) and ONEI (2021:table 15.2 – Visitantes por meses).

³ Based on the author’s own calculations with data from ONEI (2017a:331), ONEI (2020:342) and ONEI (2021:table 15.12 – Ingresos asociados al turismo internacional).

⁴ According to Foucault (1978:94), power is not a property of persons or groups of persons. Instead, it lies within all relations (be they of economic, romantic or amicable nature) between two or more persons, so-called ‘power relations’.

of places, people and identities, which are presented, performed and sold in various marketable forms. These places, people and identities are thereby objectified and deprived of their identity-forming features. To put it simply, tourism often does not sell diverse, complex identities but rather smoothed abstractions that materialise in purchasable objects (e.g. souvenirs, postcards), performances (e.g. guided tours, shows) or marketing plugs, thereby degrading them and subverting the foundation of their production (Young & Markham 2020:291). Nonetheless, a few others have highlighted the positive effects of tourist commodification on local identities (e.g. Cole 2007).

However, although some studies on cultural commodification in tourism thoroughly take into account questions of identity (Edensor 1997; Lanfant et al. 1995; Urry 1995), most do so incidentally. While some investigations into commodification in tourism and the effects on individual and collective identities in the Global North do indeed exist (Cloke & Perkins 2002; Cottrell & Neuberg 2005), societies and individuals in the Global South, as well as their identities, currently seem to lack scientific attention – especially when it comes to non-capitalist societies.⁵ Some of the few exceptions are the investigations presented by Roland (2010) on Cuba, Devine (2017) on Guatemala, Applis (2019) on Caucasian Georgia and González Velarde (2020) on Peru.

This reveals a research gap regarding the consequences of commodification and commercialisation for the Self – for the identity of individuals – via tourism, especially in the Global South. This research seeks to contribute to closing this gap, hence pleading for multidimensional, comprehensive analyses that transcend disciplinary boundaries to contribute to a thorough understanding of tourist commodification and its transformative effects on individuals and societies in the Global South.⁶

The case of the tourist commodification of the Cuban Revolution appears to be well suited for this purpose for chiefly three reasons: 1) International tourism has been affecting Cuban society for barely three decades, and thus for a relatively short time. It can therefore be assumed that tourism and commodification have not (yet) become commonplace; 2) the deeply socialist Cuban Revolution, in its fundamental understanding, represents an ideological antithesis that is essentially irreconcilable with capitalist commodification, as it stands for an ideology that at its heart opposes commodification for the profit of individuals. Therefore, the Cuban Revolution, through its commodification, is haunted by the very process it demonises and 3) the Revolution was – and is – identity-defining for many Cubans (González Rey & Pavón-Cuéllar 2019:11; Pupo Pupo 2005:44–46; Rojas 1995), but by no means for all (Smith 2016).

5 Following Dados and Connell (2012:13), the term “Global South” does not merely describe a diffuse ‘underdeveloped’ space; rather, it attempts to productively incorporate historical experiences of colonisation and imperialism, as well as social and economic dependencies and inequalities, into the notion.

6 Hence, the commodification of identity as a sociocultural phenomenon is of primary concern in this study. The mostly problematic commodification of nature in tourism (Fletcher 2014:10) is unconditionally acknowledged, nonetheless.

Nonetheless, in Cuba, social conditions have been and are largely determined by the revolutionary state doctrine. For a long time, the Revolution profoundly shaped the relationship of individuals with the state, the economy, religion, fellow human beings, etc. – in short, the relationship with the world around them – and in part it still does so today (Gold 2014:44).

The commodification of the Cuban Revolution thus offers manifold rifts and contradictions to examine, while Cuba itself offers a noteworthy example of commodification in a (mostly) non-capitalist society. In this sense, additionally to its contribution to the understanding of commodification processes in general, this inquiry seeks to enhance knowledge on the subject under non-capitalist circumstances in particular. From the tensions and contradictions between a socialist system and capitalist commodification, new perspectives and discursive formations for understanding tourist commodification and its effects on identities may be derived.

In so doing, the commodification of the Cuban Revolution in tourism is considered a symptom of several political and socioeconomical transformations, which involve both relationships between individuals and the Revolution, and between collectives and the Revolution, as well as the significance attributed to it. Certainly, international tourism is not the only way to observe changes in the significance of the Cuban Revolution. However, due to their disruptive, contradictory sociocultural and economic character, tourism and tourist commodification represent influential and well observable examples of this transformation. Besides the tourist commodification of the Revolution, there are certainly further influences on Cuban identities. As far as possible, socioeconomic and political influences on Cuban identities were investigated as well. Hence, the impact of processes of commodification ought not to be understood as a one-way influencing of identities. Rather, identity formation, on the one hand, and transformations of the modes of interaction with sociocultural resources affecting identities, on the other hand, mutually influence each other. In this instance, the commodification of the long revered Cuban Revolution represents the transformation in interactions with a sociocultural and likely identity-forming resource. Of central interest in this respect are the interpretations and conclusions that Cubans draw on the Revolution, its commodification in tourism and its change in meaning, as well as their overall interpretation of tourism with its manifold consequences.

This notion broadens the scope of this book, since the examination of the commodification of the Cuban Revolution and its effects on Cuban identities allows for deeper reflections on this very Revolution. On the one hand, commodification is thus the object of inquiry, with respect to which insights are gathered about its consequences for identities. On the other hand, commodification serves as a proxy, a heuristic key to Cubans' relationship with the Revolution – and therefore with the condition of the Revolution itself. By addressing its commodification, a discursive space is created in which the Revolution itself can be both described and negotiated. The research thus

transcends a mere study of commodification processes and, beyond that, aims to offer an up-to-date dissection of the state of the Cuban Revolution.

1.1. Aim of the Book and Research Questions

This book focuses on the tourist commodification of the Cuban Revolution, which is as an initial hypothesis is assumed to be highly identity-determining for many Cubans. Since identity and processes of identification are highly individual, the subjective perceptions and interpretations of Cuban individuals are at the centre of the analysis. This emphasis on subjective meanings applies to Cubans' stances on both the commodification of the Revolution and leans towards the distinct effects of tourism along with their mutual implications for individual and collective Cuban identities.⁷ Addressing the centrality of the subjective inscriptions of meaning and their discursive embeddedness for identities, this research thereby rests on a qualitative research design with a poststructuralist stance (Derrida 1973, 1981; Foucault 1972).

Thus, this inquiry necessarily considers the social and identity-effective consequences of socioeconomic transformations in Cuba in general, as well as the concomitant impacts and effects of tourism, which itself contributes significantly to these transformations. Both phenomena, i. e. current socioeconomic transformations and the growing significance of tourism, constitute the setting in which the genesis and metamorphosis of Cuban identities occurs and which conditions it. Hence, it is crucial to examine thoroughly the social and economic situation in the country, as well as international tourism and its consequences, to address questions of Cuban identity in the context of the tourist commodification of the Cuban Revolution. To clarify the research objective, its key aim is condensed into a single, necessarily comprehensively formulated question:

What implications does the tourist commodification
of the Cuban Revolution have for Cuban identities?

For the sake of operationalisation and better answerability, this broad question is further divided into twelve questions (Q_{1.1} to Q_{5.3}), as shown in Figure 1. These questions are clustered into five thematic groups. The first of these groups principally addresses a descriptive approach towards tourism in Cuba, drawing on both existing literature and empirical data (Q_{1.1} and Q_{1.2}). The additional questions (Q_{2.1} through Q_{5.3}) are predominantly answered by analysing first-hand empirical data collected in Cuba.

⁷ This book focuses on the island of Cuba. Research like this one, but carried out using the example of exiled Cuban communities (e. g., in Miami), would most certainly lead to significantly different results.

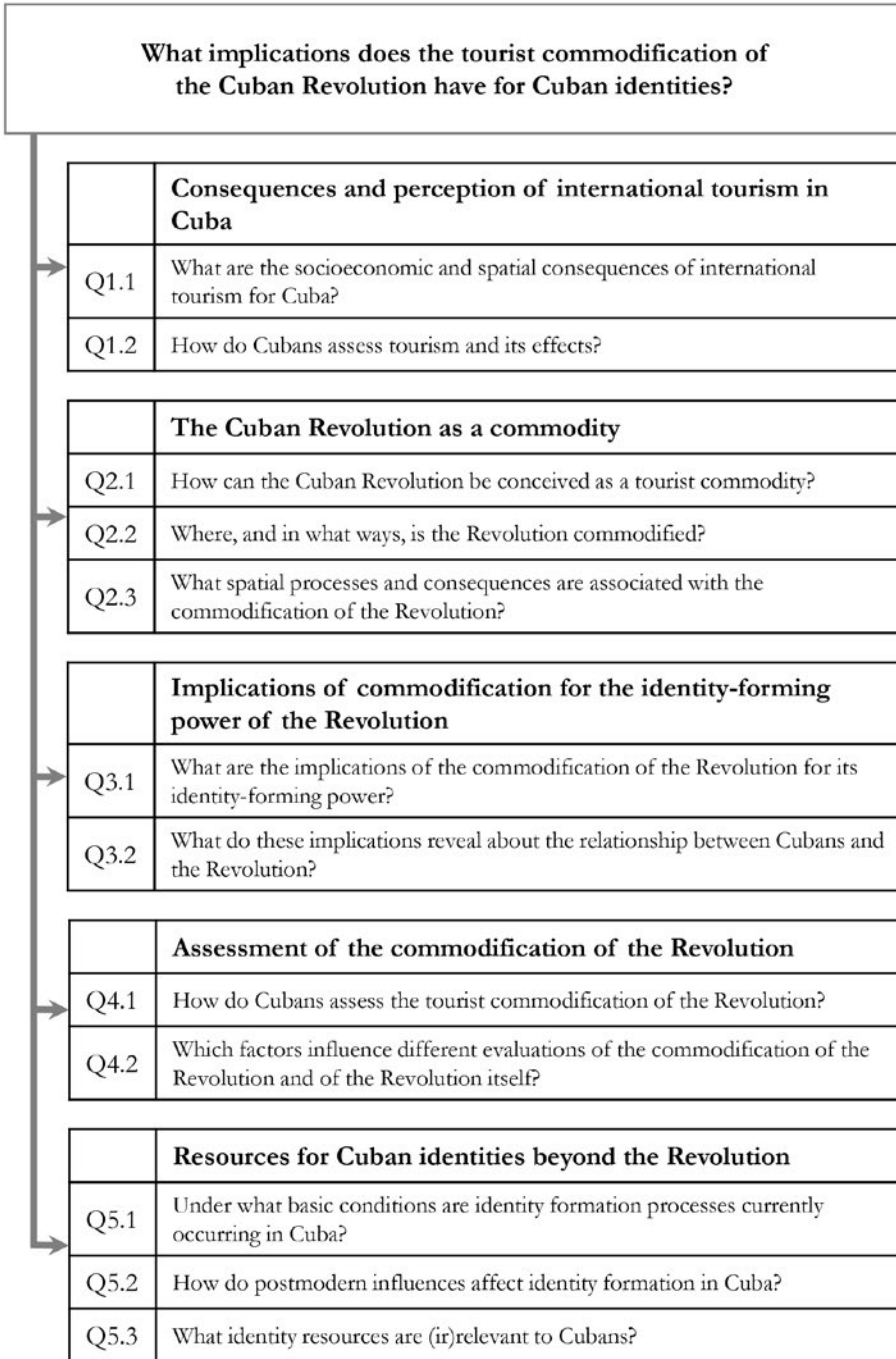


Figure 1: Central research question and sub-questions.
Source: own design.

The primary data gathered to address these research questions was predominantly obtained through semi-structured, qualitative interviews conducted during three survey periods between 2017 and 2019, lasting five months in total.⁸ For data-structuring and -analysis, Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss 2012 [1967]) was utilised. (Kindly note the extensive remarks on the methods employed, as well as their epistemological and ontological foundations, in Chapter 6). In general, changes in identity may vary in different subspaces of Cuba and take place on several levels of social organisation, such as the individual, households and families, neighbourhoods, regions or the whole nation. Therefore, different spaces ought to be examined when looking at the identity-linked consequences of changes in the general socio-political set-up of contemporary Cuba and of the touristic commodification of the Revolution. With this intention, the interviews were conducted in several different places (see Figure 2), most of which are hotspots for international tourism on the island.



Figure 2: Research sites and tourism centres in Cuba.

(Please note: interviews were conducted in all places underscored in the map)

Source: own draft, based on Völkening and Benz (2020:23).

Additionally, extensive mappings were conducted in Havana, Matanzas and Varadero. Hence, the reproduction of revolutionary symbology was mapped in these places, which are utilised so very differently in tourism. For this task, distinct intentions linked to the reproduction of symbols of the Revolution were identified and recorded, with relevant findings in this regard primarily informing the answers to questions Q2.1 through to Q2.3.

All of the questions critically reflect on the existing literature and knowledge. As a result, these reflections often contribute complementary and confirming, as well as

⁸ Survey periods in Cuba comprised February through to April 2017, August and September 2017, as well as February through to April 2019.

contradictory, perspectives on existing corpora of theory. These perspectives on theory are brought into focus through the lens of the empirical material, and an attempt at abductive theory development (Reichertz 2019:268–269) is made on that basis.

Certainly, the commodification of the Cuban Revolution might perhaps lead to additional effects, besides the alternation of Cuban identities and possible alienation from the Revolution. However, apart from the spatial effects of the commodification of the Revolution, these additional effects are not considered in the following. At the same time, numerous other, predominantly social factors beyond processes of commodification can influence the self-perception of Cubans, for instance religious beliefs, questions of gender and ethnicity or identification with a professional activity. These entities (e.g. community, religion, labour), which also shape individual and collective identities, are correspondingly addressed within this book, although the focus falls on the Cuban Revolution and its commodification. Thus, various additional resources for identities are presented in Chapters 2.3.2 to 2.3.7 and their significance for Cuban identities considered.

At this point, it seems important to stress the impossibility of reflecting all factors that influence Cuban identities – or any identity at all. Identity formation is a complex and perpetual psychosocial process; moreover, it can never be fully understood by the individual him- or herself, since the emergence of identity to some extent always takes place within the pre- and unconscious, and thus it is under the influence of the internal “id” and the “superego” (Freud 1989 [1923]).⁹

As Findlay (2019) showed in her study of a Cuban family, describing itself as “cien por ciento Cubano” [one hundred per cent Cuban], individual narratives of one’s own identity sort different aspects of *cubanidad* – i. e. the conviction of Cuban peculiarity – according to a very specific understanding. Individual elements are excluded, highlighted, subordinated or superordinated, emphasised or concealed, so the individual can construct a narrative through which he or she gives a stable account of the Self that is logical and self-empowering.

Consequently, Cuban individuals and their personal interpretations of the realities of the Cuban Revolution and its commodification are focused on. Following the Grounded Theory approach, the findings are successively layered, based on the “ethno-narratives of actors in the field” (Tavory & Timmermans 2009:244). The aim is to identify and describe individual structures of meaning. On this basis, a typology can be established that outlines different social groups in terms of how they deal with and assess potentially identity-modifying processes of commodification. The objective, in the true spirit of qualitative research (Sandelowski 2004:893), is to create a thorough description of the commodification of the Cuban Revolution and its impact on Cuban identities, as well as to provide individual Cuban interpretations of this phenomenon.

On a meta-level, this research investigates the circumstances and consequences of the (post-)socialistic transformation on the island for society, individuals and their

⁹ Terms in the German original: “Es” and “Über-Ich”.

respective relationships with the Revolution, thereby ultimately making it comprehensible and able to be accurately scrutinised.

To clarify the purpose of this research further, it shall be explained what it is *not*. Analysing identities and their transformation does not mean observing two coherent, complete, well-defined identities A and B, with A representing past identity and B representing the current identity of an individual or collective, wherein B is the later form of A modified by a set of transforming factors that can be clearly specified. In this rejected view of identity and its change, the transforming influences (e.g. the commodification of identity-forming resources, modified value systems, a changed employment situation) could be distinctly recognised, and it would be possible to seamlessly trace how and why identity A turned into identity B (see Figure 3.1).

Rather, referring to the black box phenomenon, a different understanding is proposed for the examination of individual and collective identities. Think of a flashlight used to illuminate a wide river at night. The river is so vast that the flashlight only roughly reveals the scale of the river. In fact, what lies beneath the river's surface can only be discerned close to the riverbank. However, by observing the swirls and turbulences on the water's surface, a good impression can be obtained of what the riverbed looks like. To disentangle this metaphor: this research represents the flashlight through which the 'river' of Cuban identities shall be illuminated (see Figure 3.2). Identity formation partly occurs in the unconscious (below the surface), as the "ego is not master in its own house" (Freud 1981 [1917]:143). Hence, the currents visible on the water's surface (the interviewees' expressions) must be interpreted, in order to infer their underlying influences in the riverbed (e.g. socioeconomic transformations, the tourist commodification of the Revolution). By swaying the flashlight back and forth (i.e. asking appropriate interview questions), downstream (past) sections can also be elucidated. Glimpses into the future are naturally denied, although current flow patterns allow for speculation about future identity trajectories.

Altogether, the influence of the commodification of the Revolution in tourism, as well as of other socioeconomic shifts on Cuban identities, can only be observed indirectly. Following this understanding of identity, no clearly separable identities A and B can be studied individually. Instead, transformations and continuities of the same identity need to be considered under alternating influences.

Furthermore, another remark seems appropriate for those who, by reading this book, hope to find answers to the question 'Who *are* the Cubans?' or similar queries. Due to the qualitative-analytical design of this study, it is neither intended nor possible to derive representative or confirmatory conclusions that quantify the effects of the tourist commodification of the Cuban Revolution on Cuban identities, or to establish an exact ranking of the identity-generating elements of all Cubans. Nor is the aim of this research to determine *the* identity of Cubans in an objective manner or to find an all-encompassing explanation for the Cuban national soul. Such essentialist understandings of identity are indeed firmly rejected.

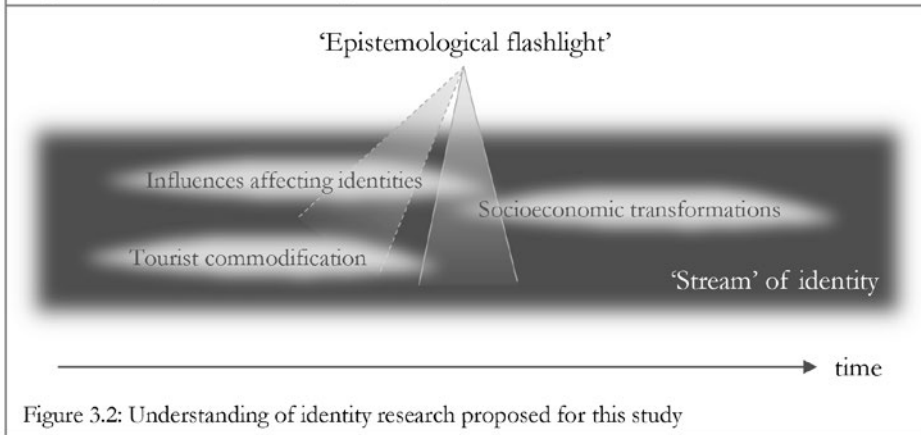
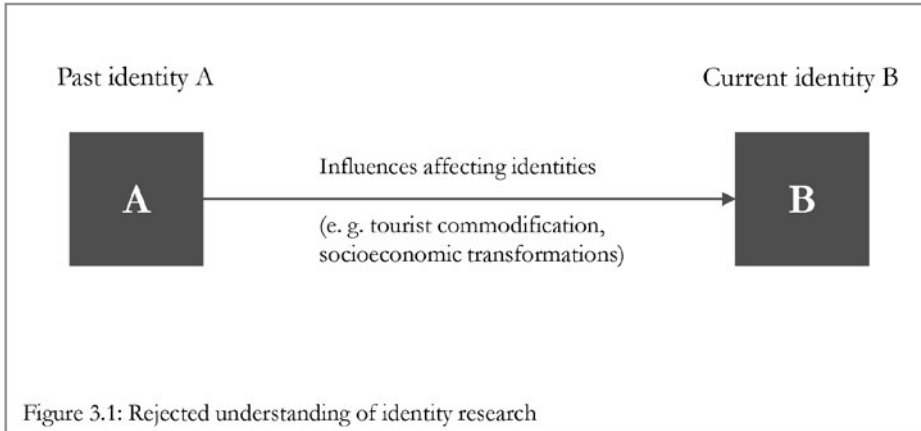


Figure 3: Schematic description of the examination of identities.
Source: own design.

1.2. Structure of the Book

Principally, this book is divided into nine chapters. Their succession and the interrelationships between them are illustrated in Figure 4.

The first chapter, which includes this section, provides a broad overview of the objectives of the underlying research, introduces the central research questions and expounds the general outline. After these introductory remarks, Chapter 2 contains the theoretical foundations on which identity and identity formation are built. After some considerations regarding the nature of individual and collective identities, the chapter continues with the circumstances for identity formation under modern and postmodern conditions and addresses postcolonial identities as well. Thereafter, various resources for the formation of identities are presented and discussed.

The following Chapter 3 turns to the processes of commodification. It begins with a discussion of the Marxist origins of the concept of commodification and continues with reflections on commodification in neoliberal and socialist environments – although for the latter only a very few references are available. Eventually, the effects of commodification in tourism are discussed, using Castree's (2003) six principles of commodification.

Chapter 4 provides the sociohistorical background of Cuba. Initially, it portrays the emergence of a national consciousness during the colonial period, which ended after three wars of independence and led to a formally independent country. The chapter then proceeds by describing the social and economic conditions in Cuba during the first half of the 20th century, which finally culminated in the Cuban Revolution. Next, the rise of the Revolution as an identity-creating narrative for many Cubans is illuminated. The historical outline is continued with explanations of the development of revolutionary-socialist Cuba, taking a closer look at defining phases and events such as the *Período Especial* and the death of Fidel Castro, and ending with current events.

Chapter 5 focuses on international tourism in Cuba, which has shown increasing importance since its (re-)introduction at the beginning of the 1990s. Tourism is presented as one of the main sources of commodification in Cuba and an intensifier of socioeconomic inequalities. Furthermore, the 'production' of Cuba in and through tourism is discussed.

Chapter 6 expands on the methodology applied for this research. It contains further details on the main empirical methods as well as a description of the sample of interviewees.

In Chapter 7, the findings of the empirical studies are outlined. The structure of the chapter is oriented along the code system developed during the analysis via Grounded Theory. In part, this code structure intersects the research questions, with one code possibly referring to more than one research question. Subchapter 7.8 is exceptional, since it does not unfold results from the qualitative interviews but rather introduces the findings of the mappings.

Chapter 8 interprets and discusses the results clarified in the previous chapter while involving the theoretical foundations laid out previously. The research questions are then answered in detail. As a result, overlaps and divergences of theory and empirical evidence become clear and are considered. In summary, an abductively substantiated hypothesis of the implications of the tourist commodification of the Revolution for Cuban identities and in spatial terms arises. Moreover, principal considerations on the conditions for the emergence of contemporary identities in Cuba are formulated. Additionally, the empirical corpus allows for reflections on the very state of the Revolution. Furthermore, the methodological approach of this thesis is critically assessed and evaluated. Finally, considerations on the normative stance of scholarly inquiry into the processes of commodification are made.

Finally, the thesis ends with a conclusion. This final Chapter 9 highlights the main findings and situates them in a broader conceptual context. An epilogue concludes the thesis.

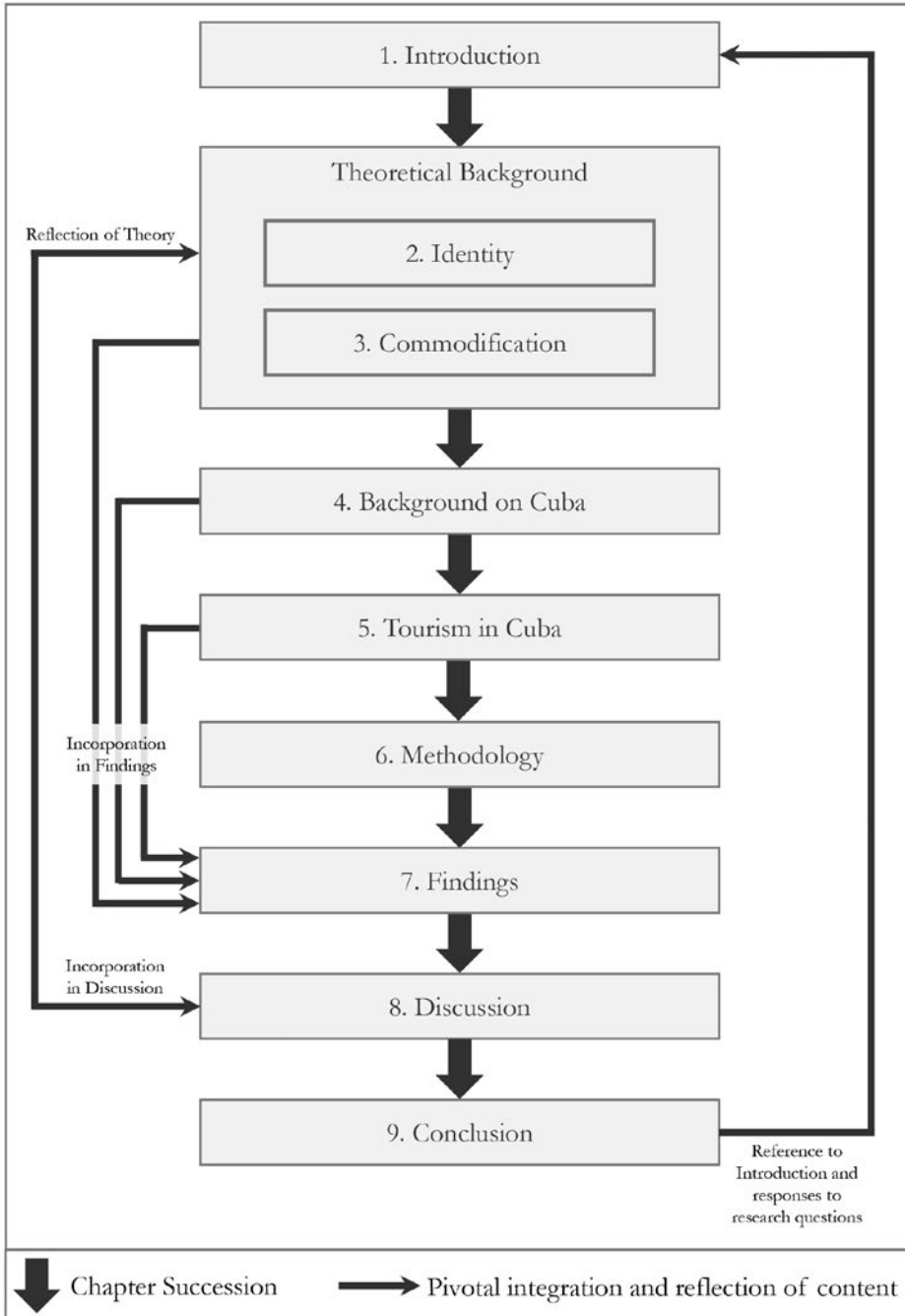


Figure 4: Book structure.
Source: own design.

2. Identity

[...] a shaky edifice we build out of scraps, dogmas,
childhood injuries, newspaper articles, chance remarks,
old films, small victories, people hated, people loved;
perhaps it is because of our sense of what is the case
is constructed from such inadequate materials that
we defend it so fiercely, even to the death

Salman Rushdie (1991:12)

Rushdie's figurative and emotive while simultaneously telling and vague description highlights the way to approach the complexities of identity, "*born as a problem*", as Bauman (1996:18–19) expresses in a less charming but nevertheless trenchant way. The huge linguistic distance between both phrasings hints at the scope of scholarly perspectives on identity and identity formation.

Moving into this theory chapter on identity, the questions 'what is identity?' and 'what identity are we talking about?' need to be addressed, since social sciences gave rise to a multitude of identity concepts after the recognition of individual subjects and their identity: individuals do not simply have *an* identity (in the sense of *one* identity) but most often possess a national identity, a cultural, sexual, social, historical and religious identity. Accordingly, social sciences developed various perspectives on and definitions of identity, which, however, are partly contradictory or not clearly separated from each other (Stryker 2000:21–22). The list above could certainly be extended and refined, but the point made is clear: identity is a multi-dimensional entity, whose scopes partly overlap, for example in regard to national, cultural and social identity. However, strictly delineating the dimensions of identity from each other is neither feasible nor reasonable. As an example, reciprocal constitutions of national, religious identities can be mentioned, as they are often used to support each other and remain fragmentary without the others (Kanas & Marti-novic 2017:221).

In addition to the preliminary recognition that identity is a complex, multidimensional construction, it is imperative to emphasise the distinction between individual and collective identities, which also interfere reciprocally with each other. However, the nature of this distinction between individual and collective identities is more gradual than fundamental, as in both cases the individual is conscious of and identifies itself by being part of social groups. The demarcation between individual and collective identities may be administered via the aim of the particular epistemological interest: either the subject (individual identity) as a member of a larger group or the group itself (collective identities) becomes the focus of interest.

Over the past decades, the scientific as well as popular literature has increasingly seized the concept of identity and propelled it into unimagined heights of popularity. This popularity has in turn led to an inflationary and progressively arbitrary use of the term 'identity' in almost any sphere of society. In 1975, Erikson (1975:17–18) bemoaned the increasing number of diagnoses of "identity crisis" when he noted that "identity concepts have secured themselves rather quickly a place of familiarity in the thinking or, at any rate, the vocabulary, of a wide range of readers in a number of countries". Likewise, Goldstraß (2008:9) carved out the by now inflationary and continually increasing heterogeneous usage of the term 'identity'.

But what is identity? Bauman (1992:679) offers a first approximation of the concept, which he describes as "one of the most universal human needs" that "is expected to offer [...] self-confidence, certainty and 'knowing where one stands'". Furthermore, identity is supposed to instruct the individual "how to place [...] among the evident variety of behavioural styles and patterns, and how to make sure that people around would accept this placement as right and proper" (Bauman 1996:19). Building on Bauman's description, Keupp et al. (2006:70) declare identity as an eternal and universal problem, which is today as fierce as never before. They describe identity as merely a temporary solution for an identically named problem.

The conjunction of identity with hardness-laden terms like "problem" (Keupp et al. 2006:70) or "problematic" (Hall 2003:277), "need" (Bauman 1992) and "task" (Bauman 1996) indicates the complexity of the fabric of identity, which has animated the interest of scholars for centuries. The lack of a definite conception of identity also causes this fascination. Mercifully, for those brooding on questions of identity, and unfortunately, for proponents of clear explanatory models, no all-encompassing concept of identity and identity formation exists in pure form. For cultural identity alone, an almost incomprehensible multiplicity of definitions and conceptions exists (Kim 2007:238) in the form of rather general conceptions to describe changes and modes of behaviour in a society, without necessarily describing an individual or a collective perfectly. As Hall (2003:274) observes, "it is impossible to offer conclusive statements or to make secure judgments about the theoretical claims and propositions" on identity and identity formation.

Nevertheless, or perhaps because of its definitional broadness, identity is one of the key concepts of social sciences (Wetherell et al. 2009:VIII) and is gaining attention in

human-environment research as well (Schulte et al. 2020). It also receives much attention and reception in geography, albeit to a comparatively lesser extent. This might be owed to the fact that interactions between identity and space are in principle known and respected, but detailed interrelationships require further consideration (Valentine & Sporton 2009:157; Wißmann 2011).

After this prologue, the theoretical foundations for the formation and alteration of identities are examined. As identity is a complex composition of individual and collective traits, which are inextricably linked with each other, both phenomena are described wherever reasonable to do so.

The first subchapter (2.1) focuses on the psycho-social mechanisms of individual (self-)identification and the construction of identities, to lay a stable, socio-psychologically grounded foundation for subsequent considerations. Subchapter 2.2 explores the ever-transforming socioeconomic conditions that frame identity formations of individuals and collectives. First, pre-modern (2.2.1) and modern (2.2.2) conditions for identity genesis are briefly discussed, before the possibilities for identity formation in postmodernity are considered. In addition to describing the fundamental characteristics of postmodern conditions (2.2.3), two strands of theory describing postmodern identities are contrasted: on the one hand, a rather pessimistic view based strongly on Zygmunt Bauman (2.2.4), and on the other hand, a more optimistic perspective adopted by, for example, Heiner Keupp (2.2.5). To account for Cuba's colonial past and its implications for Cuban identities, postcolonial identities and their peculiarities are discussed (2.2.6). Subchapter 2.3 combines the findings of the preceding pages and synthesises them with Derrida's deconstruction (2.3.1). Subsequently, Chapters 2.3.2 to 2.3.7 present the "resources" (Jullien 2017) subjects and social groups use to construct individual and collective identities. As the focus of this book lies predominantly on the collective identities of Cubans, resources for identity formation that are assessed as significant for Cuban identities receive a closer look (inter alia nation, culture, religion, etc.). Finally, the concluding subchapter (2.4) takes a glimpse at the positive and negative consequences of contemporary possibilities for identity formation as well as what strategies subjects might pursue in order to manage this 'task' successfully.

2.1. How Identities are Constructed

This chapter explores the sociopsychological processes that underlie identity formation. The main theoretical concepts used in social sciences to describe the formation of identities are the essentialist, social-interactionist and discursive approaches. The latter two are similar, since both consider the relationship between individuals (and groups) as being pivotal for identities. While the essentialist notion of identity is introduced and discussed herein, it must be dismissed against the backdrop of the post-structuralist framework of this research.

In contrast to identity essentialism, discursive approaches recognise the embeddedness of individuals in social structures and power relations, as well as the resulting consequences for identity formation processes. In contrast, this conception is underdeveloped in most interactionist theories. Therefore, the discursive, poststructuralist approach appears to be most suitable for this inquiry and for scrutinising specific Cuban circumstances.

2.1.1. Overcoming Essentialist Notions of Identity

In the traditional understanding, identity was perceived as essentialist, as an innate trait or a solid core unalterably defining who and how someone is. Lossau (2013:654) traces this formerly common conviction back to French philosopher René Descartes and his postulation “*Cogito, ergo sum*”.¹ Likewise, German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1997 [1794]:17) declared:

One cannot think anything at all without thinking of one’s ego, than to consciously think about yourself; one can never abstract from one’s self-awareness.²

During modernity, the prevailing idea of identity moved away from an essentialist conception. The increasing intricacy of the modern world and the cognition of a non-autonomous identity that cannot be formed purely from within the individual provoked this shift in the understanding of identity. The sociologists Mead, Goffman and Erikson developed today’s notion of ‘social identity’, which is not a solid trait assigned to each and every one at birth but has to be negotiated and developed in interaction with others and – which is alterable and anything but static and fixed.

This conception of subjective identity as constituted by the individual on the foundation of social interactions and through the ascription of meaning to social processes, lay the foundations for the concept of ‘symbolic interactionism’, mainly based on Blumer (1969), a student of Mead. According to advocates of symbolic interactionism, the identity formation of an individual occurs mainly in interaction with others. In general, symbolic interactionism takes a highly social-constructivist stance, as Charon (1998:42) explains:

the human sees the world through perspectives, developed socially, [therefore] reality is *social*, and what we see ‘out there’ (and within ourselves) is developed in interaction with others.³

¹ Translation: “I think, therefore I am.”

² Original: “Man kann gar nichts denken, ohne sein Ich, als sich seiner selbst bewusst, mit hinzu zu denken; man kann von seinem Selbstbewusstsein nie abstrahieren.”

³ Note on italics in quotations: unless noted otherwise, italics in direct citations were adopted from the source.

Korte and Schäfers (1998:41) note that for the proponents of symbolic interactionism, the experienced and internalised reactions of others to an individual's acting or speaking are essential for self-experience and self-constitution. Drawing on this understanding, Erikson (1980) developed a comprehensive concept to explain the development and condition of the identity of the modern subject. Within this concept, he expounded the process of human self-placement in a complex social world. Erikson (1980:22) explained the "feeling of having a *personal identity*" as resting upon "the immediate perception of one's selfsameness and continuity in time; and the simultaneous perception of the fact that others recognize one's sameness and continuity".

Following this line of thought, identity is an expression of the subject's confidence in itself and its competence in maintaining its own continuity and sameness – as well as in the perceptions of others (Erikson 1980:22). Greenwood (1994:109) picks up on Erikson's idea and describes it as a "sense of identity", which he characterises as "a set of relatively enduring and integrated fundamental beliefs, principles and commitments, references to which can provide an integrated explanation of much of their intentional behaviour" (Greenwood 1994:109).

However, Erikson's concept of identity was criticised by subsequent, mainly late- or postmodern authors, mostly for assuming unrealistic relations between the individual and society under capitalistic conditions. Criticism also arose concerning Erikson's idea of the successive development of identity with different stages, ranging from early childhood to adolescence. According to Erikson (1980:94), by running through all of these stages, the individual accumulates "inner capital [...] from all those experiences of each successive stage".

Keupp et al. (2006:30) describe Erikson's perception of identity as being irresolvable linked to modernity, as he assumes a modernist line of thought with a "regularly and linear trajectory"⁴ transferred to the concept of identity. Furthermore, according to Keupp et al. (2006:30), Erikson assumes that subjects can reliably embed themselves in assessable social and cultural continuities that allow for self-discovery. By doing so, Erikson neglected fundamental postmodern trends (e.g. individualisation, globalisation), which unsettle the foundations of modern societies and diminish the potential for resilient and secured identities (Keupp et al. 2006:30).

However, this critique is contested. Schachter (2005:152), for instance, suggests re-reading Erikson's approaches and placing them in post-modern contexts, believing that his theories are equally appropriate for post-modern societies and subjects. Yet, simultaneously, Schachter (2005:153) acknowledges that a "dialogue between Erikson and the postmodern" would be necessary, from which Erikson's theory would emerge altered. Moreover, Alberts and Durrheim (2018:296) criticise Erikson's positivist approach, which they argue conceives identity formation as a thoroughly uni-

4 Original: "regelmäßig linearer Entwicklungsverlauf"

versal process always bound by the same principles. Indeed, Erikson omits the impact of discourses and power relations on identity formation, which is pivotal from a social-constructivist perspective.

Despite the harsh – and justified – criticism of Erikson, his thoughts were ground-breaking in terms of understanding identity formation. His conceptions were adopted and modified by modern theorists on identity, most notably by Mead and Goffman, who developed the notion of synchronicity of personal and social identity, the latter two resulting a subject's identity (Keupp et al. 2006:30) through their combination.

According to Goffman (1963:57), the personal identity of a subject can be understood as the sum of its individually related features and characteristics, which contribute to the formation of his/her identity. Examples of such personal features are the physical (physical appearance, height, etc.) and the biographical (past experiences) qualities of an individual. Social identity in turn emanates from social relations, i. e. an individual's distinctive combination of belonging to different social groups. Simmel (1890:103) explains this individuation via unique combinations of social relations as follows:

The groups that the individual belongs to form, as it were, a coordinate system in such a manner that each newly added individual determines it more precisely and unambiguously. Being part of one group allows individuality a wide scope; however, the more groups the individual belongs to, the less likely it is that other persons have the same group combination, that these numerous circles will intersect again in one point.⁵

However, in contrast to the unique combination of personal traits contributing to the emergence of personal identity, social identity is based on the various social 'roles' individuals are attributed with or attribute themselves with. Depending on the particular social situation and circumstances, a person has a variety of different and sometimes overlapping roles ascribed to him/her (e.g. mother, Cuban, colleague, teacher, pensioner). These roles feature expectations concerning the subject's behaviour, attitudes, etc. by fellow human beings. Goffman (1963:2) calls the entirety of these expectations "social identity". This ascribed social identity is based on a counterpart "possessing [of] an attribute that makes him different from others", which gives one an individual identity (Goffman 1963:3). The challenge with this notion is the need (or desire) of the individual to meet the requirements of all these roles, which might lead to conflicts of roles (Goffman 1959:17–30).

⁵ Original: "Die Gruppen, zu denen der Einzelne gehört, bilden gleichsam ein Koordinatensystem, derart, daß jede neu hinzukommende ihn genauer und unzweideutiger bestimmt. Die Zugehörigkeit zu je einer derselben läßt der Individualität noch einen weiten Spielraum; aber je mehr es werden, desto unwahrscheinlicher ist es, daß noch andere Personen die gleiche Gruppenkombination aufweisen werden, daß diese vielen Kreise sich noch einmal in einem Punkte schneiden."

To understand better the concept of the social role, it is helpful to look at Mead's distinction between *me* and *I*, which are akin to two sides of the same coin. In Mead's understanding, there is an "*I* which is aware of the social *me*" (Mead 1970:173). *I* and *me* can never be identical – and they are not supposed to, as they have different functions. While "the *I* is the response of the organism to the attitudes of the others, the *me* is the organised set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes. The attitudes of the others constitute the organized *me* and then one reacts toward that as an *I*" (Mead 1970:175).

At this point, the concept of social roles becomes meaningful, in that identity formation by reassuring the *I* through the *me* is complicated by the various social 'roles' that individuals assume. The roles individuals play in everyday life can be described as Mead's social *me*. The challenge for the subjects is to connect the roles played with his/her self-perception – the *I* (Goffman 1959:17–30). Goffman compares playing a role in a theatre while acting on a stage to explain how individuals cope with the differences between the self-perceived *I* and the passively attributed *me*. Stretching this metaphor, Goffman (1959:17) states that individuals "perform" themselves in social interactions. During their "performance" they are confronted with external factors they can hardly influence, for example the "setting", the audience and other individuals taking part in the "dramatic realisation" (Goffman 1959:22). To maintain control over the situation and the way it is interpreted, constant negotiation between the different actors is necessary.

At this point, the identity of a subject can be understood as a combination of multiple identities – referring to personal features (personal identity) and to various social relations (social identity) – as well as their interdependencies. To cope with this "complex pattern of identities" (McCall & Simmons 1966:76), which is negotiated between external attributions and expectations as well as individual interpretations of the self, the individual needs to constantly "balance" (Krappmann 2016:70) both personal and societal dimensions of its identity.

2.1.2. Symbolic Interactionism and Discursive Identity Formation

As elaborated previously, large parts of an individual's identity are based on social relationships – and therefore on communication processes, which are now considered in more detail. In the chapter *Communication and Action* of his outline of social systems, Luhmann (1995) proposes a concept of communication that explains the formation of social identities and takes into account their constructiveness. He describes communication "as the synthesis of three selections, as the unity of information, utterance, and understanding" (Luhmann 1995:147).

'Information' refers to self-consciousness or, more precisely, self-awareness of individuals, that needs to be communicated ('utterance'). Goffman (1959) emphasises the

importance of utterance for identity formation in the title of his book *The 'Presentation' of Self in Everyday Life*.⁶ As 'understanding' happens in the intellect of the counterpart and thus is the only part of identity formation that necessarily takes place without the direct influence of the individual, it is the most critical step in social identity formation. As Böing (2017:33) explains, successful social identity formation requires the acceptance of the "identity proposition offered", or at least its reflection by an alter ego that might be present either physically or notionally. This understanding of social identity has strong parallels with Erikson's (1980:22) approach, for whom the recognition and acknowledgement of others are crucial for the formation of identity. In this sense, as understood by symbolic interactionism, identity can be conceptualised as the overlapping of self-awareness, self-presentation and reflection.

However, criticism of the concept of symbolic interactionism are often formulated due to the neglecting of super-individual social norms, symbols and immaterial entities (e.g. religion and culture). Symbolic interactionists are often accused of overestimating the relevance of social relationships and introspection for identity formation while underestimating the – at least for Mead – important references to nature, evolution and history (Preglau 2015:71). Nonetheless, the cardinal elements of symbolic interactionism experienced a revival and revaluation during the Cultural Turn (see, for example, Denzin 1992).

One offshoot from this dilemma of symbolic interactionism neglecting non-human counterparts is the consideration of the individual as an actant, as suggested by Zima (2017). As individuals interact and communicate not solely with other human beings, and as identities are also formed in relation to super-individual entities, the individual may be defined as an actant. Additionally, the interaction between an individual and collective subjects and identities can be described best on an actantial level. Identity-forming relationships with other actants can thus take place on the "individual as well as [...] infra-individual, artificial and supra-individual"⁷ (Zima 2017:9) levels.

A subject-constituting interaction occurs with actants who do not necessarily need to be subjects in an individual or a collective manner, or material objects. Instead, individuals also constitute their identity and subjectivity in a constant interrelationship with "collective, abstract or mythical subjects"⁸ (Zima 2017:1). Zima (2017:15) thus sees "infraindividual, artificial, abstract and mythical instances"⁹ as possible actants and partners for interaction. In this sense, "nation, state, class, spirit, Weltgeist"¹⁰ (Zima 2017:1), 'destiny' and 'history' can be perceived as "mythical subject-actants"¹¹ who are

6 Emphasis by the author.

7 Original: "individuellen sowie [...] infraindividuellen, künstlichen und supraindividuellen"

8 Original: "[...] kollektiven, abstrakten oder mythischen Subjekten [...]"

9 Original: "[...] infraindividuellen, artifiziellen, abstrakten und mythischen Instanzen [...]"

10 Original: "[...] Nation, Staat und Klasse, [Geist], Weltgeist [...]"

11 Original: "[...] mythische Subjekt-Aktanten [...]"

neither individuals nor collectives, but who nevertheless undeniably affect the identity formation and self-subjection of the individual (Zima 2017:15).

Apart from their rootedness in symbolic interactionism, Mead and Goffman's concepts were also criticised for assuming that "the subject still has an inner core [...] that is 'the real me'" (Hall 2003:276). To them, this inner *me* is influenced by and shaped in ceaseless interactions with the surrounding social and cultural world (Mead 1970:173–178). From the perspective of the symbolic interactionists, this "gap between the 'inside' and the 'outside' – between the personal and the public worlds" (Hall 2003:276) – can be bestridden by identity. Mead, Goffman and others believed that subjects project their Selves onto such cultural identities, at the same time internalising their significances and values. This helps subjects to reconcile their very own emotions and perceptions with the 'objective' positions they hold in social and cultural discourses. (Hall 2003:276).

Studying Foucault reveals a solution to the inadequacies of symbolic interactionism and the modern, overcome notion of subjects with unalterable cores. In his understanding, subjects in any society are 'produced' and formed by discursive practices, which are themselves pervaded, "characterized and constituted" by multiple "relations of power" (Foucault 2003:24). These relations of power in turn cannot exist without the production, accumulation and constant motion of these discourses, which are supposed to reproduce the relations of power responsible for their existence (Foucault et al. 2003:24).

As Bruder (1993:40–41) shows, Foucault tries to explain the power interests which lie beneath the concept of subjectivity and how apparently autonomous subjects internalise control and rules imposed by structures of power and thereby reproduce these external authorities within themselves. Rath (1991:83) elaborates further on this point and postulates that modern anthropology 'produced' the subject at the turn of the 19th century. He explains Foucault's concept of the internalisation of objectifying (and simultaneously subjectifying) discourses and practices. From a Foucauldian perspective, medical surgery produces the invalid, psychiatric examinations produce the lunatic, schools and universities produce the student and so on. Foucault's perspective is considered 'modern', as it internalises this production of the subject – it becomes a "self-constraint" (Rath 1991:83). Whoever is forced into the category of manhood or 'being human' must and, by being part of the particular discourse, wants to identify him-/herself only by exclusion from or inclusion in these categories (Rath 1991:83). Of course, the dichotomies mentioned (healthy person – invalid; sane – lunatic; etc.) are only examples for possible categories for identity formation.

It should be noted that these identity-forming practices and discourses are shaped via speaking and acting, albeit this means taking distinct positions that are provided within discursive practices. Here, the importance of communication for the formation of identity, as emphasised by Luhmann (1995), becomes clear anew. Furthermore, discourses, practices and institutions that characterise and shape subjects and their identity hold a certain historicity, and hence an embeddedness in historical processes and contexts.

Identities emerging from discursive, power-permeated processes thus provide the underlying conception of identity on which this inquiry rests. The pivotal realisation of the symbolic interactionism of identity formation always occurring in social contexts and encounters is thoroughly consistent with this understanding of identity formation. Hence, to comprehend collective and individual identity formation ultimately and to explore identities, a comprehensive examination of the social and cultural frameworks within which identities are formed is necessary. To conclude, it should be noted that these frameworks are not static but are products of modifiable, discursive negotiation processes.

2.2. A Sociopsychological History of the Conditions for Identity Formation

In this chapter, the socioeconomic circumstances for identity formation will be discussed from a historical perspective. Starting with the emergence of a notion of the individual subject and the development of this intellectual concept during the Enlightenment, the drastic changes during transition to modernity that affected almost every aspect of life will be expounded. Although the idea of an individual identity, and identity formation as an “individual task” (Bauman 1996:19), surfaced in modernity, the problems concerned with identity are not a consequence of modernity; rather, identity “was a ‘problem’ from its birth – *was born as a problem*” (Bauman 1996:18–19). Finally, the effects of postmodernity on identities which are increasingly exposed to globalisation, fragmentation and similar processes are discussed.

However, initially, an important piece of advice seems necessary: the circumstances affecting identities presented in the following pages, for reasons of clarity and comprehensibility, are arranged in a diachronic way that did not exist in the form presented. Instead of a clear, evolutionary sequence, the envisaged circumstances for and effects on processes of identity formation were at no point in time comprehensively valid for everybody and everywhere. Sometimes, two – or even more – of these general conditions were or are suitable for a society and its individuals. And while one or more of these descriptions may apply (or have applied) to some individuals of a society, it is anything but a safe assumption that it must be apt for explaining identity formations for all members of this society.

2.2.1. Cogito, ergo sum: Pre-Modern Identities

Although some scholars argue that “self-awareness and the ability to self-reflect” (Hauge 2007:46) are unique and perennial human features, contemporary perspectives on identities and the individual emphasise the adaptability of identity constructions according to coeval social circumstances. In the preface to *The Order of Things*,

Foucault (1970:XXIV) defines the beginning of the 19th century as a turning point in the evolution of the individual and locates the “invention” of man at that point in time. Bruder (1993:38) further emphasises this point and declares the notion of an individual to be modern itself. Elias (2001) especially concentrated on the indivisibility of society and individuals, either of which cannot be defined without the respective other (as hinted in the title of his book *The Society of Individuals*). Thus, the recent understanding of an individual as a self-reflexive autonomous subject with their very own ideas and plans, and who “states its opinion, carries responsibilities, expresses criticism and acts autonomously”¹² (Zima 2017:4), seems to be a result of modern and postmodern individualisation.

In the following, pre-modern notions of the individual and its identity are elucidated briefly, to provide a better understanding of societal shifts that took place during the Enlightenment and that led the cited scholars (and many more) to link the development of the idea of individuals closely to the dawn of modernity.

Most protohistoric societies were not familiar with the individualistic concepts conceived today. Individuals often merged within collectively practiced myths, and early tribal societies were based on the similarities of their clans’ people (Zima 2017:5). Following Bruder (1993:38), many ancient societies and languages lacked a way of expressing what constituted the ‘individual’ as we know it today. Instead, some utilised the *persona* concept, an attribute for a single existence that is linked to its social status and comes with various social obligations. Only within this pre-set frame of social status were autonomous behaviour and an independent (ethical) identity possible (Bruder 1993:38–39).

In the ancient and medieval past, there was little need for an expression to attach to an egocentric individual. Instead, collective identities and assignment to certain groups were more important in the collective practices of these pre-modern societies (Bruder 1993:38). In medieval Latin, expressions like *individualis* or *individuum* were used for indivisible entities (human and non-human). They were rather technical, scientific terms, mainly used by cleric scholars to describe singular instances among species. Elias (2001:160) adduces the example of the “Holy individual trinity”, which was used until the 17th century, whereby individuals were perceived as “vague” and without the property of drawing definite conclusions from them about the individual in question.

Nonetheless, human beings have always had a sense of both collective and individual identities, the latter being the result of self-consciousness (Elias 2001:Chapter III). As Elias (2001:184) stresses, “there is no I-identity [individual identity] without we-identity [collective identity]”. As described in Chapter 2.1.2, one cannot exist with-

¹² Original: “[...] eigene Meinung äußert, Verantwortung trägt, Dissens anmeldet und autonom handelt [...]”

out the other, and both are ceaselessly created and altered through socialisation and self-reflection. However, depending on the prevalent societal conditions, the emphasis of the collective against individual identity (and vice versa) is shiftable, as the relationship between the individual and society is never stationary (Elias 2001:162). While in societies with a comparable simple social hierarchy (e.g. early hominid societies) collective identities dominated and individual identities were often rather shapeless (Elias 1992:67–68), subsequent social systems allowed individual identities to come to the fore – often to the detriment of collective identities.

Seminal in this shift in the significance of the individual over collective identities were several developments during the 17th and 18th centuries. Scholars of the Enlightenment recognised that in a certain way, everything is individual, with its own history, specific abilities and appearance – in short, they have an individual identity. Elias (2001:161) uses the example of Mont Blanc as a mountain with a unique, individual shape to illustrate the scholar's perceptions of the particularity of each *individual* case.

Over time, the formerly broad term *individual* was narrowed down, until it was particularly reserved for people. The contemporary understanding of 'individual' is characterised by recognition of the uniqueness and peculiarity of every human being and its existence in comparison with every other human being, on the one hand, and the high valuation of this singularity, on the other (Bruder 1993:38). Elias (2001:161) assumes that the particularisation of the term happened in the context of social developments, which nurtured a strengthened urge to communicate regarding the individuality of humans and especially their personal individuality in relation to the individuality of everyone else (i.e. society). Descartes' already mentioned *Cogito, ergo sum* illustrates the shift in human self-perception from an emphasis of collectives to individuals.

2.2.2. Modern Identities

The shift from a collective-oriented societies to the self-centred perspectives of individuals during the transition from pre-modern times to modernity is no coincidence, since Feudalist societies mainly perceived their 'individuals' as members of a religious community, a guild or a similar collective (Zima 2017:5). In feudalism, people were mostly born into their social circumstances and peer groups, and birth often determined one's life path: aristocrats were born into their dynasties, townspeople were heritably part of craft guilds, while peasants were bound to their land and a feudal lord. Descartes was among the first to recognise the increasing shift of emphasis: within the self-concepts of people, the ages-old superposition of individual identities by collective identities was altered (Elias 2001:196–197).

During the Enlightenment, which was strongly influenced by the ideas of Descartes, the human subject was understood as a "unified individual" (Hall 2003:275), capable of reasonable thinking, of autonomous action and of perceiving itself. A person's identity

was now thought to be its “essential centre” (Hall 2003:275) that was overall unalterable and “first emerged when the subject was born, and unfolded with it, while remaining essentially the same [...] throughout the individual’s existence” (Hall 2003:275). The individual now experiences itself – or, more precisely, its own thinking and reasoning. For the individual, this is the only thing existing unquestionably, while everything else might be a trick of the devil (Elias 2001:198).

Descartes’ *Cogito*, the increasing emphasis of individuality and the commencing focus on introspective perspectives correlated with the overcoming of feudalism in Europe and led to waves of jumbled social, economic and political relations, a grinding “maelstrom of change” (Harvey 1990:13), endorsed by the thinkers of the Enlightenment and early modernism.

Yet, more contemporary scholars observed the fundamental shift from collective to individual identities, as the increasing self-centeredness and introspection of individuals caught their eyes. Marx (2012 [1844]:27) retrospectively describes “throwing off the political yoke” of feudalism (which, for instance in France, was not completed before the French Revolution in 1789) as the simultaneous removal of “the bonds which restrained the egoistic spirit of civil society”. This liberation from old bonds and the transition into modernity were accompanied by great insecurities as well as huge opportunities. As Marx and Engels (1948 [1848]:12) describe emotively,

constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life and his relations with his kind.

Many scholars of early modernity perceived these disruptive changes, the ephemerality of new orders being achieved and discarded just in the next moment as a frightening but “necessary condition through which the modernizing project could be achieved” (Harvey 1990:13). Therefore, modernity resulted not only in “a ruthless break with any or all preceding historical conditions but [was] characterised by a never-ending process of internal ruptures and fragmentations within itself” (Harvey 1990:12). For individuals in early modern societies, this must have been an “experience of convulsion, contortion and confusion” (Bauman 1997:84). Referring to Marx and Engels’ quote above, especially religion and the three estates that once promised a firm foundation for (collective) identity lost their solidity during the transition to modernity.

Marx understood the dissolution of feudal societies the fragmentation of society “into its basic element – *man*”, which he specified as “*egoistic man*” (Marx 2012 [1844]:27), who epitomises a precondition for the development of capitalism as the predominant form of civil and economic structure. Simultaneously, the decay of feudalism crushed several restrictions and offered people a multitude of new options:

“Hence, man was not freed from religion, he received religious freedom. He was not freed from property, he received freedom to own property. He was not freed from the egoism of business, he received freedom to engage in business” (Marx 2012 [1844]:27). As previous social structures that assigned individuals to their social status *qua* birth no longer existed or lost their potency, these individuals were confronted with the “problematic” (Hall 2003:277) task of creating their very own identities.

The idea of an inner core of identity, which can (more precisely, must) be placed somewhere, gained popularity during early modernity and under the impression of its new socioeconomic freedoms and obligations (Erikson 1975:17–18). However, the notion of a soberly and deliberately placed identity that calmly and immutably rests wherever it was positioned (as Descartes and Fichte presumed) was rejected. One of the most voluble critics of the conception of the human being as an unalterable, indivisible *Ego* was Nietzsche, as Oberfeuchtnner (2008) ascertains in her dissertation on Nietzsche’s conception of the *Self* – a basic concept of individual identities that permeates the œuvre of prominent subsequent scholars such as Mead and Goffman (see Chapter 2.1.2).

Instead of assuming the religiously influenced idea of an unalterable and immortal soul, Nietzsche replaces it with the notion of the *Selbst* [Self], which is identical to the *Leib* [body] and exists parallel to the *Ego*. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche (2006 [1886]:23) explicates his understanding of the Self:

But the awakened one, the knowing one, says: body am I through and through, and nothing besides; and soul is just a word for something on the body. The body is a great reason, a multiplicity with one sense, a war and a peace, one herd and one shepherd. [...] What the sense feels, what the spirit knows, in itself that will never have an end. But sense and spirit would like to persuade you that they are the end of all things: so vain are they. Work- and plaything are sense and spirit, behind them still lies the self. The self also seeks with the eyes of the senses, it listens also with the ears of the spirit. Always the self listens and seeks: it compares, compels, conquers, destroys. It rules, and is also the ruler of the ego. Behind your thoughts and feelings, my brother, stands a powerful commander, an unknown wise man – he is called self. He lives in your body, he is your body.

Parallels to Freud’s comprehension of the subconscious become clear at this point. According to Freud (1989 [1923]), who decisively influenced the psychosocial conception of identity, subjects can only be partially conscious of their own identity, since this identity is considerably shaped by the pre- and subconscious subject elements of the internal Id and the superego. The associated methodological difficulties in researching identities are thus evident (see also Chapter 1.1 and Chapter 8.7).

It is advised here to keep in mind Nietzsche’s understanding of the Self as a “powerful commander”, who reigns deep down in the individual’s body, while considering further effects of the widening possibilities and obligations for identity formation in the wake of the new freedoms offered by modernity.

Berlin (1975) especially focused on the role of freedom in identity formation. He describes “two concepts of liberty”. On the one hand is negative freedom, which frees man from coercion and societal paternalism (i. e. freedom *from*) (Berlin 1975:122–131). On the other hand stands positive freedom (i. e. freedom *to*) (Berlin 1975:131–134). Only the second kind of liberty empowers individuals to be their “own master” (Berlin 1975:131), to perceive themselves as individuals and actionable subjects. Positive freedom enables individuals to pursue their goals and to think and act in a manner they identify themselves with (Berlin 1975:131). Modernity fostered both freedom *from* (feudalism, estate-based society, clerical paternalism, etc.) and freedom *to* (free choice of employment, political participation, etc.). However, modernity concurrently brought about new restraints (see Textbox 1).

Textbox 1: Berlin on coercion in the name of the greater good

Although freedom *from* and freedom *to* may seem to be two sides of the same coin, they were developed under different historical circumstances and derived from different schools of thought. Berlin (1975:132) introduces two notions of one’s Self: the “real, or ideal, or autonomous self”, associated with “reason, [...] with the self which calculates and aims at what will satisfy it in the long run” (Berlin 1975:132). Besides, there is the “lower self”, which is characterised by “irrational impulse, uncontrolled desires” and which pursues “immediate pleasures” (Berlin 1975:132). Human beings tend to identify their real self with a larger collective: “a tribe, a race, a church, and a state, the great society of the living and the dead and the yet unborn” (Berlin 1975:132). As this collective pursues goals that the individual is incapable of achieving (e. g. a justice system or public health) and which may contradict the individual’s own goals (or the lower self does not acknowledge them as its goals), coercion of individuals is justified in a society. Berlin (1975:133) notes on this rationale:

Once I take this view, I am in a position to ignore the actual wishes of men or societies, to bully, oppress, torture them in the name, and on behalf, of their real selves, in the secure knowledge that whatever is the true goal of man (happiness, performance of duty, wisdom, a just society, self-fulfillment) must be identical with his freedom – the free choice of his true, albeit often submerged and inarticulate, self.

Nevertheless, this ostensible acting on behalf of someone’s real self is a “monstrous impersonation” (Berlin 1975:133). Although coercion may be justifiable, when individuals are forced for their own (or a greater) good, in the end it still is coercion.

However, the new possibilities of the modern, capitalist society and the overcoming of feudal structures also led to new restrictions for individuals. As Simmel (1978 [1900]:283) points out, this new “freedom is often in fact only a change of obligations; as a new obligation replaces one that we have borne hitherto, we sense above all that the old burden has been removed. Because we are free from it, we seem at first to be completely free”. But this newly achieved freedom also comes with new duties, tasks