

INTRODUCTION

Ethnicity, Inc., Revisited

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IN ITSELF, THE PHENOMENON OF ethnicity is hardly new. As a slippery, polyvalent concept of collective being-and-interest, ethnicity had already troubled Max Weber (1968, 387) a century ago—although, as a common noun, it only appeared in *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* in 1961 and entered the anthropological lexicon quite recently (Surak 2010, 152; Comaroff and Comaroff 2011, 68–72). Neither is the marketing of ethnic difference unprecedented: trade in the emblems, effects, and embodiments of “Otherness” dates back deep into to the mists of time. But what provoked the writing of *Ethnicity, Inc.*—to which this collection is both a sequel and a good deal more—was the sudden intensification, across the late twentieth-century world, of the commodification of culture and the corporatization of identity.

The significance of ethnicity, however—of ethnicity understood as the biocultural basis for forging selfhood, for feelings of primal attachment and shared affect, for claiming rights and defending interests—has grown greatly over the past few decades. At stake in the original study was not just the heightened incidence of such things as cultural tourism and casino capitalism. Or the sale of heritage and the predisposition of diverse populations to buy into it—to buy in, that is, in both senses of the phrase. It was that ethnic identity itself was being repurposed, taking on more objectified, commodified form—and, in so doing, animating novel species of value, novel claims to sovereignty, territory, and property, novel kinds of sociality and sensibility.

Ethnicity, Inc. sought to explore the impact of these transformations on the people and populations caught up in them, on the sense of selfhood, sociality, ownership, and belonging they conjured into existence, on the emotive energies they engendered, on the conscience collective they shaped. It strove, in other

words, to plumb the generative effects of the commodification of difference in terms that, pace Bruce Kapferer's (2018, 10) reading of the study, went well beyond reducing ethnicity, inc. to the spreading tentacles of global neoliberalism: terms that addressed the reifying, rationalizing effects of commerce—and also the slippages, spillages, and mutations it spawns—in an epoch in which the very nature of being and belonging, of economy and society, of nation and state, has been under reconstruction. In this spirit, the study insisted that, in the selling of ethnicity, “just as culture is being commodified, so the commodity is being rendered explicitly cultural,” a process that appeared to be potentiating new social and productive relations, revitalized affiliations, and refigured aspirations.

At the time of writing, however, over a decade ago, some of the larger political, social, and economic implications of this process remained to be determined—were, indeed, still very much in the making. These new developments have taken the phenomenon in directions that move beyond the original framing in many respects. Nonetheless, *Ethnicity, Inc.* sought to challenge conventional thinking about identity, *sui generis*, and the worlds configured in its name, concluding with a set of yet-to-be-answered questions about what might be at stake in this historic and historical turn; about the imbrication of ethnic enterprise in the changing shape of the global order; about whether the identity business could, or would, deliver on the empowerment it promised, and, if it did, for whom; about the sustainability of the relations of production, distribution, investment, and ownership it conjured into existence; about when and where it failed to take root or to flourish. At stake, too, were the sorts of ambitions authorized by identity-as-business and how they might relate to other kinds of ethnopolitics, including those inflamed by violence.

What light has been cast on these issues by the passage of time? Did *Ethnicity, Inc.* alert us to a truly significant shift in the economic, judicial, expressive, and existential nature of cultural identity? Or were the phenomena it described merely a “sideshow”—interesting, perhaps, but peripheral to “real action” in the social world in recent times, especially the action of ethnonationalist movements? In other words, did the volume slight the continuing political significance of ethnicity by stressing its material, moral, and economic dimensions or the claims to sovereign autonomy made in its name through processes of incorporation¹—that is, of it taking on the shape and values of a business, a limited liability company? Was it not the overarching sovereignty of the nation-state that actually gave “legal lebensraum,” and life, to ethnic assertions of self-determination (Surak 2010, 156–57)? In point of fact, these critiques, which continue to treat the political and the economic,

in the spirit of orthodox liberal theory, as discrete domains, misread the very essence of ethnicity, inc.: that, in the new order of things, the political, the economic, the social, and the cultural dissolve into each other, mediated by the juridical, the frame of reference that validates economic rights and political claims.

In the age of deregulation, in sum, when capital subdues labor and statecraft is increasingly shaped by the logic and imperatives of the market, it is impossible any longer to treat “the political” as anything like an autonomous sphere.² Nor is it viable, in these times, to regard the nation-state—itsself ever more corporate in form and function, increasingly living in “collaboration” with for-profit firms—as a fully independent actor, willing or able to wield tight control over the *transnational* regimes of law and business that contest its sovereignty. States may seek to condone or constrain, license or limit, tolerate or tax corporate ethnicity. But the expansion of global enterprise, international property law, the digital commons, and social media has breathed life into the marketing of difference, its capital assets and forms of “indigenous knowledge,” in ways that, as often as not, bypass the dictates of national administrations.

THE ENDURING, THE EMERGENT, AND THE UNFORESEEN

In light of the literature to which it has given rise, *Ethnicity, Inc.* appears to have proven good to think with as the twenty-first century moved through its teens. Its core argument has been taken up by a wide range of scholars, variously exploring the interplay of culture and commodification, identity and political economy, across the world. These interventions attest cogently to the versatile, often surprising ways in which ethnicity has provided both a basis for belonging and a source of value of diverse sorts—a process that is often reciprocally reinforcing, even where it flares into conflict, contestation, excess, or disappointment. Not only have forms of corporate identity continued to manifest themselves among peoples marked by their difference, but in the age of mass production and global circulation, the advantage conferred on commodities produced locally, and authenticated under the sign of indigeneity, has also interpolated many of the features of ethnicity, inc. into the economic mainstream, sometimes revitalizing industrial margins and struggling communities (Colloredo-Mansfield 2011).

A growing number of fine-grained ethnographies of such processes have also begun to address questions left open by *Ethnicity, Inc.*: about when corporate ethnicity fails to emerge where or how one might expect it—in this

volume, for instance, in Australia, where government crushed the attempts of Aboriginal people to trade culture (Darian-Smith, chap. 8), or among Madhesi (lit., “plains-dwellers”) in Nepal (Shneiderman, chap. 7)—or about contexts in which it provokes frank ambivalence, as among Roma in Edirne, Turkey, who doubt whether they actually *have* customs in common, despite strong encouragement by UNESCO to “reclaim” their intangible heritage and fear a political backlash against minorities (Blignaut n.d.). For identity to be minimally viable as the stuff of enterprise, some recognition of the rights to ethnic difference must exist in the wider political context. New studies have underscored, too, that the branding of culture-as-commodity, its “enclosure,” is seldom free of argument, often sparking bitter dispute and invariably requiring careful choreography to disambiguate the messages it conveys; this is a point persuasively made by Tatiana Chudakova (chap. 2, see also discussion that follows) in respect to the contested effort to market Buddhist merit in Buryatia, eastern Siberia, and by Finola Kerrigan, Jyotsna Shivanandan, and Anne-Marie Hede (2012) on the ongoing struggle of officials in charge of the *Incredible India Campaign* to brand the kaleidoscopic, volatile, hybridizing cultural facts of the world’s largest democracy. It is also made evident in Andrew Graan’s (2013) analysis of the fractious local response to efforts by Macedonia’s rulers to refigure Skopje as a historic European capital, a case to which we shall return. These rich accounts permit us to develop a more nuanced understanding of what is at stake in the pragmatic production of ethnocommodities, in the symbolic and material labor invested in making and marketing the tangible stuff of difference, thus to transform identity into a capital resource (see Cook, chap. 5). They also underline the fact that the more power it packs, the more millenary its promise, the more the process of incorporation itself is subject to critique and to argument over its ownership, efficacy, and implications.

In a revealing examination of what is actually entailed in establishing a trade in goods construed as cultural assets, Rudi Collredo-Mansfield (2011) drew on four detailed cases—Russian salmon (Gerkey 2011), Peruvian ceramics (Chan 2011), Indonesian textiles (Aragon 2011), and Bolivian quinoa (Ofstehage 2011)—to cast light on the ways in which their commodification depends on particular kinds of activity.³ The success of bringing ethnic objects to the market and securing a sustainable niche for them, he shows, rides on a number of things: among them, intensified levels of local production, the mastery of new technologies and expertise, and the engagement with external sources of investment and merchandising. The viability of ethnocommerce is quite frequently threatened from *within* by efforts to privatize shared knowledge, skill, or hereditary status—and from *outside* by those who seek to profit from that commerce by investing in it on highly exploitative terms. Drawing further

on those four case studies, Colloredo-Mansfield (2011) adds something else: the intellectual property law used to appropriate (i.e., “enclose”) shared cultural practices and possessions can *also* be mobilized in the name of the commons—what some have termed the “substantive grounds for collective life” (Reid and Taylor 2010, cited in Colloredo-Mansfield 2011, 52)—to protect joint heritage from individual entrepreneurs.

But it is primarily against something larger, against what is seen to be the rapacious tendencies of global capital that indigenous movements have grown up all over the planet to champion indigenous stewardship of the commons: to wit, local communities have increasingly taken strong, often eloquent, stands against the commercial erosion of their territories. Witness, in this connection, the quest of the “native” population of Haida Gwaii to preserve the custody of their terrain in British Columbia, Canada (Weiss 2018). Or the eight-year-long battle of Saami (also rendered Sami or Sámi) reindeer-herding cooperatives in northern Finland to retain control of their historic grazing lands (Sanders 2015), this in the face of a complex relationship of Saami to the commodification of their culture and the indigenous tourist industry (Kelly-Holmes and Pietikäinen 2014). Such cases lead Colloredo-Mansfield (2011, 53) to make another important claim: that, rather than being regarded as opposed spheres, markets and commons ought to be seen as “growing up together.” The very idea of the commons, in its contemporary sense, he suggested, is often a *consequence* of market development, not a vestige of precapitalist relations. Hence the conviction of many resource activists that, if the commercial success of ethnopreneurs can be sustained, it would enhance their power in negotiations seeking—on behalf of the collective good—to limit the potential damage wrought by commodification, especially at the hands of outsiders.

This strange symbiosis of market and (ethno)commons is evident, too, in contemporary development discourse. For some time, and increasingly, global marketing strategists have stressed the competitive advantage of rooting production, even of mainstream commodities—as Apple, Inc. has done in Cupertino, California, for instance—in locally grounded sites. This is said to confer on them a distinctive “geographical indication,” or GI, a tag recognized by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) to denote “the possess[ion] of qualities or a reputation . . . due to [their] origin.”⁴ In enhancing product identity, “geographical indication” is thought, in prospect at least, to invigorate the local cultural *terroir* (Colloredo-Mansfield 2011, 51)—and, with it presumably, ethnicity, inc. But not always. In practice, resort to GI may be, and often is, quite strained. Michele Fontefrancesco (2012), for example, testifies to the fact that the “crafting of locality” in Valenza, Italy—where distinctive jewelry is manufactured in ostensibly traditional fashion—is belied by the rigid

enforcement of new techno-scientific norms from above. In the age of finance capital and deregulation, the narrative of the commons and commonality is often just that: a *narrative* that, with ever greater intensity, romances vernacular authenticity, productivity, creativity, and togetherness—while still being commandeered by those who take control of the means of manufacture and marketing. Meanwhile, the policies of more traditional development agencies, those aimed at populations on the margins of established economies, display a newfound emphasis on the capacity of *inalienable* heritage to generate alienable value. In the upshot, they have taken to urging people/s marked by their difference to regard alterity *itself* as a species of monopoly capital, an “abundant,” profitable source of wealth waiting to be harvested (see Hirsch, chap. 3).

The very intangibility of ethnocultural heritage enables and enriches the rhetoric of value without limit, of the conjuring of money from nothing (cf. James 2015). Precisely because it does, investors and developers also have continued to push financialization, encouraging competitive ethnoprise and the recognition of indigeneity as a site of abstract investment capital (Nakassis 2013, 118), however uncertain it may be to yield returns of any magnitude. All too often, the discourse of natural abundance reverberates cynically, often alchemically, in marginal environments, those already stripped of other assets or employment opportunities. In such places, as noted in *Ethnicity, Inc.* (2009, 41–42), the concept of “human capital” can take on ever more unnerving concreteness. Not only their culture or their natural habitat, but the very bodies of ethnic subjects increasingly become the source of exploitable—and for venture capital from outside, sometimes highly profitable—value in the form of branded raw material: for genomic and pharmaceutical research (Abu El-Haj 2012; Benjamin 2015; Petryna 2009), for “natural” prowess in sports,⁵ for innate musicality (Copeland n.d.), military force (May, chap. 4), and exotic sexuality (Meiu 2017; also this volume, chap. 1).

It seems clear, then, that, over the past decade or so, ethnicity, inc. has been on the rise in many places, some of them unexpected, as in the case of the Griqua, a marginal population in the South African interior (see Schweitzer 2015), who at one point in their history were said scarcely to exist at all and who have based their “reinvention of indigeneity . . . [and] the commodification of [their] ethnic history and culture” in a struggle for land rights (Zips 2015). Or, halfway across the world, in Indonesia, where “the production and consumption of Chineseness as an ethno-commodity” had long been obscured by “a singular preoccupation with identity politics” (Siew-Min Said and Chan-Yau Hoon 2013, 17). Or in Tibet, where, Martin Saxer (2013, 201) has told us, being Tibetan “serves as a commodity or asset . . . [as] actors engage, willingly or

not, in the economy of Tibetanness.” Some mass media have picked up on the global story: the *Vancouver Sun*, for one, published a report in early 2018 under the title “The Rapid Growth of Ethnic Economies.” These economies, it said, had increased dramatically in both their geographical scatter and their visible incidence over the previous few years.⁶ We could go on ad infinitum: the phenomenon, patently, has entered the realm of the new normal. Tellingly, the phrase *ethnicity, inc.* generated 134 million results on Google at the time of writing and *ethnic economies*, 15.4 million—hardly, to close the circle, “a sideshow” in the history of the present.

This is not to deny, as we have already made plain, that the spread of *ethnicity, inc.*, founded conjointly on the commodification of culture and the incorporation of difference, has been *very* uneven; that, where it has manifested itself, it has been demonstrably variable in its form and substance; or that, in a number of contexts, it has been flatly repudiated or iconoclastically redeployed or paid no heed. Self-evidently, moreover, it has had positive effects for some and steep downsides for others—indeed, for *many* others, typically along pre-existing lines of inequality and, worse, of brute exclusion. All of these things continue to be true. But at base, there is no question that *ethnicity, inc.*, sui generis—as a constructed sociological, political-economic, affective, and ethical reality—has sunk deep roots and, however haphazardly, is spreading. Nor only spreading. Its framing logic, that of *identity, inc.*, is also extending itself further and further into the heartland of collective consciousness and material life. Just as it is radiating out horizontally across the geoscapes of the planet, so is it upscaling vertically, to more embracing forms of being in the world. And in both its horizontal and its vertical extensions, it is interpolating itself ever more deeply into the contours of the labile, constantly mutating global economy. In fact, the increasingly elaborate efforts by marketers everywhere to invest commodities and brands with distinctive identities, to root them, as we have noted, in a particular atmospheric terroir, underlines a core insight from *Ethnicity, Inc.*: that contra clichés about economic reductionism, commodification is a queer process: the more that culture is made marketable, the more the commodity itself is being rendered cultural and made into a recognizable, customized complement to the distinctively desiring subject (Mazzarella 2017).

ETHNOECONOMICS: SCALING OUT, SCALING UP

Perhaps the most immediate expansion of the reach of *ethnicity, inc.* is to be found in its original locus classicus: ethnocommunities in postcolonial states and settler colonies, emergent “nationalities” in postsocialist societies, and

culturally marked minorities in (more or less) liberal democratic polities. Here ethnic corporations tend to do more than just persist where they can. In addition to making bold claims for political and legal recognition, many of them have widened their horizons in pursuit of business opportunity, some of it new, some of it an intensification of older kinds of commerce: in heritage, eco-, and thanatourism;⁷ in enclaved enterprises such as gambling and licensed big-game hunting; in mining, forestry, transport, and communication; in leasing vast swathes of arable land to foreign firms and states; in “living museums” that offer “menus” to visitors to consume culture at “fixed prices” (Zips 2018, 22).

In Africa, for instance, there is now wide acknowledgment of the “rebirth” of the “kingdom of custom,” the sovereign terrain of indigenous kings and chiefs, a number of whom—anticipated, in *Ethnicity, Inc.* by the case of the ruler of the Royal Bafokeng Nation—have emerged as powerful corporate figures, even CEOs (Comaroff and Comaroff 2018). The liberalizing thrust of structural adjustment policies, under the Washington Consensus, played a significant role in this turn of events. It actively encouraged the devolution of aid and investment away from national capitals toward so-called local communities, thereby (re)legitimizing their rulers as their sovereign representatives—with fiduciary jurisdiction over their often considerable material and cultural interests (Comaroff and Comaroff 2018; Geschiere 2018). It is no wonder that many of these resurrected rulers have become skilled dealers in ethnic patrimony, willing real estate brokers with mining companies, and adept venture capitalists on their own account (Coyle 2018; J. Smith 2018) or that, emboldened by a mix of authority at once corporate and customary, some have come to challenge the sovereignty of the state, to the point, at times, of national emergency (Buthelezi and Skosana 2018). These cases illuminate, yet again, the entanglement of politics and economy at work in ethnicity, inc., how it can potentiate unprecedented inflows of value and, in so doing, reconfigure “traditional” modes of empowerment. This while opening the door to new, or repurposed, vectors of inequity, exclusion, even despotism (Darian-Smith, chap. 8).

Outscaling: From the Country to the City

As we have already seen, identity-based enterprise has also continued to move beyond its “traditional” terrain, having become ever more visible in towns, in the metropole, and in the force-fields of mainstream national and transnational economies. Here commodified ethnicity frequently takes shape at the interface with regional and state-level institutions, giving rise to remastered categories of subjectivity and belonging. Thus Falina Enrique’s (2012) narrative of the

rivalry between two popular music groups in Recife, northeastern Brazil, each trying in its own way to make its urbane, youth-oriented style resonate with the emergent category of *cultura*, an official, artistically expressed form of “regional identity.” The state-sponsored *cultura* scene endorses a specific understanding of culture and national inclusion, one that shapes a sense of citizenship, even democracy, among its participants. A similar process of ethnopreneurial citizenship is evident in the “staging of authenticity” and “internal orientalism” in mainland China’s ethnotourist industry (Wang 2012). Buyi people in a village in the southwest have responded to local government development initiatives by establishing an ecological museum that has turned everyday household goods into protected cultural artifacts. There is nothing new in this, of course, but, as Mengqi Wang shows, the attempt to make the surrounding village *itself* into a timeless open-air diorama has been undermined by the very process of museumization. For the largely script-based rendering of Buyi life as ossified essence, to be consumed by outsiders, has thrust their microworld into the currents of national history. The villagers have begun to appropriate and enact these scripts both in their daily interactions and in their dealings with the state, enabling them to become energetic agents of their own commercial enterprise—thereby proving, too, that “they needed to be traditional first if they want to be modern and ‘developed’” (452).

As it expands and embeds itself, ethnoincorporation often challenges national sovereignty and belonging, not least by (re)fashioning identity-modulated forms of citizenship; of this, more in a moment. The interpolation of ethnic subjectivity into the *conscience collective* of the larger body politic has also become a rapidly growing concern of the mass-marketing industry; palpably more so than it was in the early years after the millennium.⁸ The emerging practices of this industry are revealed in a burgeoning literature on ethnicity and advertising: Shalini Shankar’s (2012, 2015) studies of Asian American merchandising, for instance, suggest that mainstream copywriters aim to index brand identities in ways that seek to reconcile common stereotypes of a homogenous Asian identity with more subtle characterizations that acknowledge internal diversity. But the overriding aim of their messaging is to transform this population from “model minority producers” into “model minority consumers”; this by way of a process of “racial naturalization” that makes them visible as legitimate citizens on the US popular cultural landscape (2015, 15). Here, as minority populations come to constitute lucrative target markets, ethnic publicists become engaged as much in the business of selling their culture to coethnics as to others. Arlene Dávila (2012) has alerted us to the ambiguous implications of this endeavor in her path-breaking *Latinos, Inc.*, which explored the

multibillion-dollar Hispanic advertising industry in the United States. Insider efforts to harness the potential of the Latin American "nation within a nation" (4) and to brand its diversity, she observed, have turned out to be only a little less reductive, homogenizing, and exoticizing than the exertions of mainstream marketers—threatening to render the Latino population marginal to the larger (i.e., white) consumer public.

Not surprisingly perhaps, the reception by Hispanic Americans of these vernacular marketing strategies has been deeply ambivalent. They have provoked estrangement, anger, bemusement, and, simultaneously, vigorous debate not merely about the politics of Latino identity but also about the perverse, self-referential pleasures of consumer recognition. Like other instruments of merchandising, advertising seeks to mobilize the creativity of market forces as an abstract form of capital, one that has the capacity, in and of itself, to generate value. As such, it has emerged as both a means *and* an object of collective action. Not surprisingly, then, the argument of images within Latino marketing has become complicated, ironic, and sophisticated as widening cultural and class diversity among Hispanics resists stereotype or encompassment. And as "Hispanic business" becomes more and more entangled with the US and the transnational economy.

Upscaling: From Ethnicity, Inc. toward Nationality, Inc.

Talk of the Hispanic "nation within a nation" points to a further dimension of the upscaling of the identity economy—namely, nationality, inc., a phenomenon that has gained a good deal more visibility and scholarly attention of late. In some contexts, ethnicity, inc. and nationality, inc. merge seamlessly into one another, notably in those polities actually constituted as ethnonations—by contrast to civic nations—whose citizens, united in blood and soil, are held to share unique biocultural substance, most famously, perhaps, being Germany (Brubaker 1992), although there are many others. But even modern civic nations, as Benedict Anderson (1983, 7) reminded us, hold to the fantasy of cultural homogeneity and deep "horizontal comradeship." What is more, nation-states of both sorts long foreshadowed ethnicity, inc. in as much as they have always acted as corporations, possessing sovereign territory, investing themselves in signs of distinction, and marshaling their interests by recourse to law and war. Orthodox political theory, of course, has matters the other way around, at least in part. It takes ethnicity-as-polity to be a primordial form of association, derived from "hot" attachments of ancestry and consanguinity—and destined, with the advent of modern government, to give way to cooler ties of solidarity,

vested in a social contract and rational-legal authority (cf., e.g., R. Smith 1986; Kamenka 1975). Critics have long been skeptical of this telos and the categorical opposition on which it rests. Even in western Europe, heartland of the liberal polity, ethnic and civic nationalism typically infuse each other, their difference, despite often shrill claims to the contrary, more a matter of degree than kind (Weber 1968, 925; Povinelli 2006, 197; Tilly 1990).

Ethnicity and nationalism, to be sure, are political artifacts of a similar sort (Weber 1968, 392), both being mythopoetic fictions sustained by idioms of genealogy and family. The former, moreover, is seldom erased by the latter (Corrigan and Sayer 1985), *itself* a perpetual work-in-progress. As Renan (1992) famously quipped, the existence of a nation, is a “daily plebiscite,”⁹ not least because, to a greater or lesser extent, ethnic heterogeneity is always present to trouble it. This is most overtly so in postcolonies, precisely because they were bequeathed an imperial legacy of divide-and-rule. But at the turn of the twenty-first century, as capital has freed itself from state regulation—and as labor has been outsourced, government privatized, and the social contract undermined—the sovereignty of civic nations has been challenged by claims made against it in the name of difference, diversity, and minority rights.

This, in turn, has evoked energetic pushback in those civic nations, resistance being framed in ever more ethnonationalist-sounding terms: hence Brexit Britain, Trump’s USA “base,” Kaczynski’s Poland, Erdogan’s Turkey, and any number of strident neonationalist movements elsewhere—all of them fueled by the worldwide increase, under economic and political duress, of migration and other kinds of traffic across state boundaries. These movements invoke the nation-as-identity, claiming to defend the culture, heritage, and patrimony of the homeland against difference-as-dissolution; indeed, as one astute observer put it, by asserting “a sense of rightful ownership.”¹⁰ Asked another: “What drove Brexit if not the anger that some genuine British identity—remembered or misremembered—was being drowned within the shallow waters of the European Union?”¹¹ The same spirit is evident in the rallying cries of popular neonationalism across the globe: in *russkii* (Russian culture, language, and traditional values [Blakkisrud 2016]), in *Hindutva* (Hindu nationalism [Basu 1996]), in the call to limit “Germany for the Germans”¹² and “Make American Great Again.”

It is in this context that the contemporary salience of nationality, inc., as a distinctive, late modern phenomenon, is to be understood. While the state might always have been a corporation in the broadest sense of the term, in recent times it has become corporate *sensu stricto*: a metabusiness, so to speak, acting *an und für sich*, franchising out its operations to the private sector,

husbanding its assets, commodifying its collective *Geist* to attract commerce, and creating a conducive fiscal environment for those who fund the election of its officeholders—and, to a more limited extent, constitute its tax base. No longer simply a custodian of the commonweal or a guarantor of the welfare of its citizens, government, under “neo-liberal political rationality” (Brown 2003), has largely relinquished its role as a mediator among “class and sectarian interests” in the name of a greater public good (Harvey 1990, 108); it is *itself* ruled by the logic of the market, now taken to be the archetypal instrument for the production of social and material value (Foucault 2008; see above). As the state takes on the form of a holding company, as the line between politics and economics gives way, as the population becomes a body of consumer citizens and the social contract is rewritten, so nation branding and mass politics converge. And so, increasingly, ruling regimes are charged by their subjects: market us (Graan 2013, 281).¹³ Thus do heads of state become businessmen, and some businessmen heads of state, be they Silvio Berlusconi or Donald Trump, Emmanuel Macron or Cyril Ramaphosa, Mark Rutte or Tihomir Orešković.¹⁴

Branding . . . and Its Discontents

Nation branding, noted *Ethnicity, Inc.* (2009, 122–36), is an integral aspect of the incorporation of identity. It reimagines twenty-first-century nationhood through the lens of the commodity form in a manner at once highly self-conscious, widely theorized, and thoroughly fetishized—and has opened up a privileged site for contemporary state-making.¹⁵ As an upscaled version of the commodification of ethnicity, it is its analogical extension in a digital era: an era in which civic (neo-)nationalism, as we intimated a few moments ago, begins ever more to mimic ethnonationatism. Yet conjuring the civic nation in these terms always poses a challenge as, on the face of it, this species of polity lacks the essential, and essentializing, coherence that ethnicity presumes. It has to forge homogeneity and fraternity in the face of social difference and cultural heterogeneity; in the face, also, of the fact that the metaphors of kinship and genealogy on which it draws tend to stretch rather thinly across its typically diverse scapes. Which is why politicians, confronted by centrifugal forces that pull against national integrity—global capital, world religions, transnational movements, social media, and the electronic commons—invoke the emotive power of autochthony: of inalienable belonging rooted in birth, heritage, locality, destiny (Geschiere 2009). Hence the impetus, too, when seeking to assert collective identity, to enlist the force of the market, the persuasiveness of commodity images, and the cunning seductions of branding.

Recent work on nation branding makes clear how pervasive it has become, not least as a form of governance, in what Noam Chomsky¹⁶ has dubbed the age of “corporate mercantilism”: one in which trade and its trappings are taken to be the prime engine of wealth, in which international diplomacy gives way to professional marketing and the enchantments of advertising (Coombe 2012; Marsh and Fawcett 2011). The global order, structured hitherto as an articulated system of national economies, melts into a planetary market for transacting the emblems of national *je ne sais quoi*, reputation, and the capacity for creating value—“fame” in the vocabulary of classic Melanesian *kula* exchange (Munn 1986).

Pioneering copywriter Simon Anholt claims to have coined the phrase *nation branding* in 1996 (Kaneva 2011), although he recently expressed remorse that poor countries are encouraged to “blow wicked amounts of money on futile propaganda programmes” to the sole benefit of “beastly PR agencies.”¹⁷ But publicists are adept at hyping their own commodified essence, their “indispensable” ability to engender communicable esteem, trust, and investment potential, especially in uncertain times.¹⁸ The *Anholt-GfK Nations Brand Index*, published annually by major corporate players in the industry—Anholt himself remains one—rates and ranks the brand images of fifty countries, offering complex computations of fluctuations in “national reputation.”¹⁹ It is widely cited and debated by business publications across the planet. Self-publicizing advocates of rebranding point to a catalog of achievements: how EU neophyte Croatia shed its shady Balkan associations for a pleasing patina of Mediterranean chic; how stagnant, strife-torn Tatarstan elevated itself from the dreary Russian periphery by rediscovering a masterful medieval history and sense of national purpose; how Cape Verde, an arid archipelago off the African coast, became an attractive “melting pot of cultural flavour”; how the minuscule West Indies polity of Saint Kitts and Nevis became the world’s most patronized—but, as the World Economic Forum notes, far from the only²⁰—purveyor of belonging (i.e., “economic citizenship,” full heritable nationality) acquired in exchange for local investment.²¹

As this suggests, branding promises to defy ordinary means and ends; in so doing, it is like the transformative magic of ritual. Take, for one especially dramatic example, *Guerrilla Marketing* in Colombia (Fattal 2018, xi). Here local publicity professionals, with a nudge from US counterparts, mounted antiguerilla warfare by way of “weaponized advertising.” Their multimedia campaign was vested in the faith that branding can “reconcile the irreconcilable”—in this case, that it could make counterinsurgency into a humanitarian project and conjure the Colombian armed forces into agents of peace. By laboring, often

very creatively, to depict the strife-torn present into a time of “post-conflict,” they sought to will the future into existence. This, after all, was “Colombia, land of magical realism.”

Not only has the high-tech end of the identity business grown by leaps and bounds, but it has also provided a site of sociopolitical experimentation with complicated consequences. Graan’s (2013) account of nation branding in Macedonia casts sharp light, in this regard, on the skill and deception involved in staging nationality, inc.—and the dialectics of reception and rejection to which it can give rise. In 2010, the Macedonian government embarked on Skopje 2014, an extensive, expensive project to make the city over as a properly European capital. Eager to shed its jaded Yugoslav past and defuse challenges to its status as an independent nation-state, the architects of the scheme refashioned the urban center around a giant equestrian statue of Alexander the Great, in a style held to embody haute Euromodernity. For Graan, this assertion of historic, ethnonationalist identity, unceremoniously erasing archives of the Ottoman and socialist past, was more than just an iteration of nineteenth- and twentieth-century state-making (161–62, 165). Those who commissioned the scheme saw it as pivotal to the production of an ethnonational brand: an identity-as-commodity-image capable of evoking worldwide recognition, recalibrating the relation between national polity and global economy. As an engine of financial value and “soft power,” the project was taken as the *sine qua non* of neoliberal statecraft. But many locals were skeptical. Vocal opposition decried its cost, its embarrassing turn to Euro-kitsch, and its provocative erasure of Muslim, Albanian, and Greek legacies, sparking a counterpolitics among those who saw the exercise as a misguided effort to flog the country. It also drew forth parodic comment: one sardonic postcard depicts the city as an empty wilderness beneath that rearing steed of Alexander the Great (174). Yet the protesters, Graan noted, seemed less concerned that their rulers had branded the nation than with the fact that they had failed to brand it well. If anything, popular outrage reinforced a common faith in the fetishistic promise of identity-as-commodity image.

But are the enchantments of brand-making ever unambiguously efficacious? Branding—be it ethnic, national, regional, or any other—is never without surfeit, writes Nakassis (2013), never without an excess of meaning that defies attempts to discipline its intelligibility. As semiotic confections, brands invariably run up against other signs circulating in the world. As a result, they frequently spawn unforeseen associations. We have already noted that efforts to interpolate ethnic consumers by marketing techniques seldom take place without friction, often producing ambivalence, doubt, dispute, or censorship.

Like all advertising, such efforts ride on hype, on a partially acknowledged con, on the hope that some will be taken in, and on the reality that there is always a yawning gap between what a brand promises and what it can deliver. Nation branding, like ethnic branding, traffics in a double abstraction. On one hand, it calls into being a collective identity, a concrete imagining. On the other, it turns the putative substance of that identity into a currency, a species of rentier capital (Nakassis 2013, 117). But as a medium of investment and speculation, its fetishized capacity to vitalize commodities and power wealth production is open to demystification the moment it fails to deliver.

And it *has* failed to deliver, quite visibly, with recurring economic crises driven nowadays largely by the excesses of speculative finance capital—of capital detached from “real” production—and exacerbated by rising rates of mass debt and government-by-austerity. This failure, in turn, has drawn outspoken cynicism about the traffic in national and ethnic identity, some of it from insiders in the business. Jose Torres, a Spanish counterpart of Simon Anholt, recently declared that most nation-branding strategies “fail miserably . . . because, mainly, governments don’t have the capabilities to manage [them]”²²; bluntly, they cannot back up hype with substance and thus cannot make good on the vaunted power of commodity images to stimulate production and consumption—especially where marketing seeks to breathe life into postindustrial urban wastelands and postcolonial peripheries.

But failure does not only occur in poor countries or the poor reaches of rich ones. When, in 2002, amid the War on Terror, the US administration looked to Madison Avenue to upgrade its tarnished image abroad, Naomi Klein retorted: “America’s problem is not with its brand—which could scarcely be stronger—but with its product.”²³ Her critique went beyond the conceit that geopolitics is merely a matter of effective communication. It argued against the pretense that branding could make a corporate monologue into a social dialogue. While resorting to a reliable, homogeneous brand image might make sense for purposes of marketing washing powder, “selling” a nation in the same manner—especially one claiming to embrace diversity within a democracy—was “not only futile but dangerous.” Yet despite Klein’s mass-mediated outrage, corporate monologues *can* and do become social dialogue. Indeed, corporate nation branding, in the age of market fetishism, seeks to replay the elemental relationship, identified by Durkheim and those who followed him (e.g., Turner 1970), among enchantment, collective conscience, and sociality: the conjuring by charismatics—priests or politicians, shamans or statesmen, advertising “creatives” or “cult” figures—of messages that take on transcendent vitality, condensing diverse signs into an effervescent experience

of shared being, predicament, and purpose; conjurings that, like fetishes, have the capacity to enchant and command but also to come apart under their own excess. Or simply to fail (Mazzarella 2017).

Ethnicity and nationality, inc., then—primed by the logic of the market and by prevailing political, material, and social rationalities—are here to stay, be it as accomplished social facts, active aspirations, unrealized fantasies, or failed fetishes. So, too, are other modes of incorporation that replicate them in substance and/or spirit. Indeed, the temporalities and trajectories of the identity economy lead in all directions, from nation to ethnicity, ethnicity to nation, and both to many other species of imagined community: locality, region, religion, and so on, all alike vested in the commodification of culture and putatively shared being in the world. It is these trajectories and temporalities, many of them mutated or magnified or multiplied, that anchor the chapters to follow.

INTERSECTIONS, (DIS)ARTICULATIONS, AMBIVALENCES

The chapters in this volume uncover ways in which the commodification and incorporation of ethnicity, through their myriad entanglements with various life worlds—worlds at once social, political, and economic—have generated new kinds of identity and alterity, new forms of value and belonging, new temporalities, new modes of historicity, new space-time configurations. Exploring the presence of ethnicity, inc.—at times spectacular, at times spectral—in Australia, Fiji, Kenya, Mali, Nepal, Siberia, and South Africa shows, among other things, how the intersection of different domains of life at once expand and undermine the possibilities of producing ethnobrand; how emerging forms of value, struggles over autochthonous attachments, and asynchronous temporalities trouble the distinction between the market and the ethnocommons; how new media, advertising, and violent conflict may further a sense of collective ownership of ethnicity; and how ambivalence, excess, and exclusion simultaneously destabilize and enable the production of fetishized difference. We also attempt to pursue ethnicity, inc. to its margins, to places where it remains a path not taken or where its objectifications are rerouted through other kinds of ethnopolitics.

Intersectional Commodities, Uncertain Brands

The ethnocommodity is often a scene of odd historical convergences and cultural intersections, and therefore also a site of deep ambivalence. As a commodity fetish, ethnicity promises something essential, primordial, immutable.

Yet, contrary to its promises, it often manifests historically shifting *confluences* and *convergences* of distinct realms in social life, intersecting transregional styles, or the outcomes of competing geopolitical and cultural orientations. As suggested earlier, what comes to be “enclosed” as an ethnocommodity—the concrete objects and practices contained under its brand image—can be assemblages of multiple, competing dimensions of social and cultural life, each with its own, complex origins. The ethnocommodity, to be sure, thrives through identities rendered intersectional both in the terms of the poststructuralist concept of *intersectionality* (Crenshaw 1989) and also more broadly. Inseparable from race, gender, sexuality, and class (Nagel 2003), in its commodified form, ethnicity often derives its value from the naturalized logics of global white supremacy (Pierre 2013) and patriarchy. These historical intersections often work to reaffirm the ethnocommodity’s quality of difference and to enhance its desirability. But, as we shall see, they can also undermine the very possibility of its reproduction.

George Paul Meiu (chap. 1) describes how the image of the young male Maasai or Samburu *morán*, or warrior, became a best-selling brand of Kenya as a tourist destination, thus foregrounding a particular gender, generational, and sexual subject position as emblematic of ethnicity. Since the 1980s, men from the Samburu ethnic group in northern Kenya have migrated seasonally to the country’s beach resorts to sell souvenirs, dance for tourists, and engage in sexual intimacies with women from European countries. They have drawn on an older colonial paradigm of the Maa-speaking warrior as a young, tall man with both a culturally distinct appeal and an erotic allure. In this context, embodying the brand image of the touristic *morán* has become a complex, yet uncertain pursuit. Meiu argues that stabilizing and embodying cultural difference—in this case, the fetishized *image* of erotic masculinity and ethnosexuality—represents a nebulous process that requires constant reiterative claims. Those claims, in turn, also open up the possibility of conflict and violence.

As Samburu men come to understand the image of the *morán* as a *brand* that they *own*, various tensions emerge. On the one hand, this image excludes Samburu women and aging men from the possibilities of ethno-erotic commodification, generating new internal conflicts. On the other hand, Samburu migrants often violently attack young men from coastal ethnic groups—so-called fake *moráns*—who embrace the appearance of the Maa-speaking *morán* to make money in tourism. In response, in recent decades, young coastal men have also attacked Samburu migrants, urging them to “return home.” Meiu argues that to understand interethnic violence in this context it is necessary to pay close attention to how difference is actually produced as part of ethnicity, inc.

(see also above). If the difference of the Maa-speaking warrior holds the promise of spectacular wealth, it is the imagined essence of this identity that coastal people then seek to “divinate”—to use Arjun Appadurai’s (1989, 99) phrase—through the macabre spectacle of violence. Here, commodity fetishism enables the fetishistic logic of ethnicity (and indeed ethnosexuality) *as a hidden essence*. For, in violence, bodies are dismembered to reveal (the impossibility of) difference as an ontological given, a process that is itself ambivalent, generative of repetition and reiteration.

Tatiana Chudakova (chap. 2) describes how, over the last decade, in Buryatia, an ethnic-minority republic in southeastern Siberia, numerous local social actors have struggled to articulate a distinct local identity to attract tourists. They hope that tourism will help the region overcome its relative marginality within the Russian federal state. Since 2007, regional and state leaders have seen Buryatia’s remoteness as an appealing exotic destination for cultural, ecological, and medical tourists. Branding experts and nonexperts alike have struggled to place its Buddhism, traditional herbal medicine, and environment at the forefront of its tourist economy.

The Buryat ethnocommodity, Chudakova shows, draws value from being *betwixt* and *between* spatial and social realms, with various, unexpected outcomes. Intersections, here, are of two kinds. First, in Buryatia, the ethnocommodity emerges at the convergence of the distinct genres of religion, healing, ecological imaginaries, and tourism. For example, local hospitals may take their visiting practitioners on cultural tours; schools of Tibetan medicine involve ecotourists in collecting herbal remedies; and religious objects sometimes double as touristic souvenirs. Second, the Buryat commodity is also a product of the historical and geopolitical confluence of a pan-Buddhist world, a pan-Mongol ethnicity, and a post-Soviet lifeworld in a region that is simultaneously positioned as a margin of the Russian federation and “the Heart of Asia in Russia.” These diverse and complex historical intersections make it patently difficult to brand local products simply as “Buryat.” Except, of course, if what is branded is precisely their “derivative hybridity”—that is, the distinction of their intersectional quality.

The success of the Buryat brand, Chudakova shows, rests in part on its ability to “stake out the region’s political connections”—to point, that is, to the historical mobility of things, ideas, and people. The brand’s interpretative possibilities are here open-ended, its semiotic volatility sustaining some of its key promises. But this volatility also animates the haunting possibility of the brand’s demise. As Chudakova notes “liminal mixtures” generate ambiguities that render the brand fragile, unstable. Here then is a central paradox of the ethnocommodity’s

intersectional qualities: On the one hand, the ambivalence of odd intersections makes the commodification of difference slippery and fragile. On the other hand, the commodity reinvents itself precisely through this ambivalence, deriving value from the *distinction* of its odd mixings.

Similar intersectional paradoxes emerge with the Fijian male warrior-cum-global soldier (May, chap. 4) or the Malian male hunter-musician turned into a repository of the nation's "local culture" (Schulz, chap. 6). Meanwhile, in Nepal, efforts to objectify ethnic difference converge with complex struggles over caste and class in the arena of national politics (Shneiderman, chap. 7). But the intersections explored in the following chapters also push us to think beyond the narrower identity categories of intersectionality. For, as the logics of ethnicity, inc. permeate spheres of social, economic, and political life, value is derived from the complex *convergences* of religion, medicine, finance, kinship, sex, security, art, and activism, among other things. Such intersections animate diverse idioms, grammars, and domains that allow difference to be assembled and reassembled, always in new, albeit never fully stable ways. Here, as ethnicity, commodification, and incorporation are implicated ever more deeply in the minutiae of particular life worlds, difference can emerge precisely from the unexpected intersections generated by the market's inextricable social embeddedness.

Ethnocommons: Social Articulations

Immediate manifestations of ethnicity, inc. often come to reverberate across social fields in ever wider concentric circles of influence. In some places, the new possibilities engendered by ethnicity, inc. transform social relations—sometimes quite radically—producing new lines of inequality, new subject positions, or, at times, revitalizing and repurposing older forms of custom, kinship, and belonging. Meanwhile, rules and rhythms of social life also inform the specific terms and trajectories of ethnobusiness. What it means to belong to a place or a people, what forms of moral worth and material wealth are desirable, or what collective futures are imaginable are all questions people address, implicitly or openly, as they participate in ethnobusiness. The commodification and incorporation of ethnicity and the production of an ethno-commons are caught up in a dialectical relationship. If, as pointed out above, it would be erroneous to extricate the economic from the political dimensions of ethnicity, inc., so too—it is worth remembering—are market dynamics inextricable from sociality. *Together* they constitute ethnoeconomies (see also Meiu 2017).

Eric Hirsch (chap. 3) shows how, in southern Peru, ethnoeconomies bring developmental logics of finance and the cultural dynamics of social value into the same space of the market, generating new social positions and orientations. Since 2010, in Peru, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have shifted away from pursuing development projects focused on poverty alleviation, emphasizing instead how people can manage and maximize a kind of wealth that inheres in individuals, groups, and—in this case, also—their ethnic identities. In the Colca Valley, NGOs have deployed the idea that, for many poor rural residents, ethnicity is the only option for significant economic empowerment. NGO workers imagine Collaguas and Cabanas individuals as already wealthy—wealthy, that is, *if* they learn how to actualize the abundant value of their ethnicity through the market skills of entrepreneurialism. And so, Peruvian and international tourists encounter members of the Collaguas and Cabanas ethnic groups engaging in staged competitions that convert local products—alpaca weavings, traditional dishes, guinea pigs, or ecotouristic experiences, among other things—into sustainable ethnopreneurial ventures. Through such competition, development workers and their beneficiaries reimagine ethnicity as a kind of extant, collective wealth, a prized asset or abundant resource, to which any ethnic subject always already has access simply by virtue of *being* ethnic.

And so the idea of *ethnicity-as-abundance*—a living fetish of fecundity—has come to permeate social life, generating new forms of subjectivity, cooperation, and attachment. Hirsch argues that, as a consequence of these practices of entrepreneurial self-fashioning, subjects and communities are transformed in important ways. For example, ventures into ethnobusiness also prompt “a [collective] passion for continuing ancestral traditions,” a nostalgia for autochthonous attachments, as well as the possibility of imagining new kinds of futures in rural areas. The advent of ethnicity-related projects has led people to revive and redeploy older (sometimes dormant) forms of village sociality, including the custom of *ayni*, a practice of reciprocal lending used by people throughout the Andes, or the custom of *faenas*, the organization of local communal work parties for the completion of large projects. Not surprisingly, such customs are now repurposed to help individuals start their own ethnobusinesses. The ensuing relations, notably, are at once mundane forms of sociality *and* business networks, blurring distinctions between economic production and social reproduction, between ethnicity, inc. and an ethnocommons.

Simon May (chap. 4) shows how, in Fiji, autochthonous attachments are anchored in the image of the male warrior-cum-soldier. This image has become

emblematic both of Fijian identity on the transnational military market and of ideal forms of masculinity and social reproduction in the Fijian archipelago. Over the past two decades, the rise in the global demand for outsourced military service has coincided with rampant unemployment in Fiji, prompting many Fijians, mostly men, to turn to an older stereotype of their identity as a “warlike people” to work as soldiers abroad. Many have been recruited to fight for the British army, the United Nations, and the United States in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere. Others have worked, among other things, as security guards for Nigerian oil pipelines or Australian immigration detention centers. The money obtained in military service abroad, even by those in low-ranking, entry-level positions, has often amounted to more than most Fijians could earn at home.

May shows that Fijians use their success on the military market to invest in social and cultural attachments in Fiji, attachments that, in turn, sustain the global image of Fijian men as “born soldiers.” Military migrants remit money to their families to invest in practices constitutive of kinship relations and forms of local belonging, in what locals refer to as *vaka i taukei*, “the Fijian way of life.” Yet military money also animates new inequalities, allowing migrants’ families to engage in forms of redistribution that exceed social expectations at a time when other locals can barely afford to meet their own material needs. Thus, Fijian migrants produce (sometimes in excess) forms of sociality and belonging that make their identity legible as *Fijian* in a wider global arena. At the same time, this legibility of military service as ethnic enables the transnational outsourcing of violence, risk, and death in an economy premised on the bodies of Others. May argues that nativist attachments and global networks of military labor are dialectically entangled, making Fijianess ever more about the value and virtues of warriorhood and thus readily available for global extraction. By bringing the ethnocommodity of the “Fijian warrior” to the global marketplace, the Fijian state encourages local practices of strategic self-essentialization that render local male bodies into militarized ethnocommodities and that drive the neoliberal privatization of military power worldwide.

The dialectics of ethnobusiness and ethnofutures reveal new kinds of *articulations* that are important for understanding the social implications of ethnicity, inc. First, the production of value involves an ongoing dialectic linking the logics of microfinance, entrepreneurialism, abundance, and the moral imperatives to reciprocity and mutuality associated with local belonging in the ethnocommons. How money is produced, stored, and circulated are questions addressed at once through entrepreneurial considerations *and* concerns over reproduction, sociality, and futurity. Second, struggles over belonging

in ethnicity, inc. recalibrate relations between scales (local, national, and global) and spaces (centers and peripheries, towns and villages). Schulz (chap. 6) describes this well for Mali, where the relations between rural areas and towns, between locality and the nation, are coopted, through media, in the production and commodification of culture. Similarly, Meiu (chap. 1) shows how, in Kenya, since the 1980s, tourist resorts and remote ethnoregions, though far apart, have been growingly implicated in one another—socially, culturally, and economically. Third, much of what is at stake in these articulations and recalibrations plays out in everyday struggles to coordinate the *temporalities* and *rhythms* of social action. Chudakova (chap. 2), for example, demonstrates how, in Buryatia, the commodification of culture generates a “new calculus of time” as people struggle to reconcile the perceived shortage of the religious ethnocommodity with the karmic time of reincarnation. Similarly, in Kenya, Samburu men engaged in “ethno-erotic economies” produce temporal asynchronies as they try to reconcile contradictory expectations associated with bodily aging, age-set relations, and the rhythms of wealth accumulation (Meiu 2015, see also chap. 1). How people synchronize, attune, or orchestrate different, competing temporalities while navigating the multiple scales and spaces of ethnicity, inc., and, generating value from doing so, are central questions for understanding the emergence of ethnocommons in these contexts. Because it is so deeply implicated in the making of social life, ethnicity, inc. may also have drastic effects on the ethnocommons in contexts in which its economies fail.

Divining Difference, Collective Consciousness

An important intervention of this volume is to open up the microdynamics of the production of ethnic identity and cultural difference to careful ethnographic scrutiny. A key aspect of these dynamics is the relationship between the production of difference and emerging forms of collective consciousness—a set of issues that requires close observation of lived experience. As pointed out above, the production of difference is an uncertain process. Difference is often established against the backdrop of complex, even contradictory (and intersectional) discourses, political orientations, economic contingencies, risks and realities, all of which can render representations of difference in excess of that which they claim to represent. The production of difference—its identification, performance, standardization—is therefore a continuous process. Within the practical logic of ethnicity, inc. producing, fixing, and pinning down the quality of difference involves a wide variety of new media and modes of communication while engendering new excesses, exclusions, and erasures. Struggles over how

the collective past is reimagined, over who comes to represent the ethnic group or over who is left out in the process, are often made manifest and addressed in such contexts. In the ensuing contestations, people often revisit their past, find new ways to narrate their identity, and attempt to figure out—not just for themselves but also for their global audiences—who they *really* are.

Susan Cook (chap. 5) shows how the 2010 World Cup represented a unique opportunity for the Royal Bafokeng Nation of South Africa, an ethnic kingdom turned into a mining corporation, to build a global reputation and thus diversify its economic activities. Since the early 2000s, the Royal Bafokeng Nation has solidified its status as landowner and major player in the platinum-mining industry, rendering quite blurry the distinctions between the community and the ethnocorporation. Cook's account offers invaluable insights into the corporation's struggles with ethnic branding. Having carried out anthropological fieldwork in the region since 1995, she became a personal advisor and research and planning executive for the Royal Bafokeng, a position she held for six years. In this chapter, an exercise in reflexive ethnography, she describes the challenges she encountered when faced with the corporation's rush to market itself in anticipation of the World Cup. The relatively short time span during which the tournament would turn international audiences toward South Africa represented a window of immense potentiality for the Bafokeng administration. But to capture the interest of global sports media required "tailoring a simplified narrative" describing who the Tswana of Bafokeng were and what made them attractive to consumers around the world.

The production of ethnic brands and cultural difference means resorting to new means of historicity—that is, new ways of reckoning the past and of producing knowledge about it for the present. Cook and her team commissioned, among other things, two books and a documentary that told the story of the Bafokeng. While primarily concerned with avoiding (and refuting) primitivist representations of Bafokeng, the team also had to leave out competing historical narratives of the region. This prompted other Tswana to resort to social media as alternative sites to question the historical representations put forth by Bafokeng, Inc. What is ultimately questioned is not the singularity of the narrative or the foreclosure of heterodox discourse or the global media through which this history is disseminated. Rather, it is who authors and benefits from collective identity. Although the relative success of this marketing campaign has continued to spark controversy on the ground, it also created new means of collective consciousness; as people now come together to debate how the corporation depicts their history, they all nonetheless claim belonging to what is now a globally renowned and, for them, collectively owned identity.

Dorothea Schulz (chap. 6) introduces an interesting case that complicates in important ways our understanding of the concrete terms in which difference works in ethnicity, inc. She shows how, in Mali, ethnicity, inc. does not play out through ethnic identity per se. Rather, central here is a more diffuse notion of local culture (or tradition), an idiom understood to entail a rural cultural stratum on which national belonging is predicated. Since the 1990s, government has supported a television program that broadcasts traditional dance and songs from across the country. Called *Terroir*, or “from the earth,” the show has tried to conflate national belonging with a generic notion of local culture—rather than, say, ethnicity—thus depicting various groups as horizontally integrated in the nation-state and depoliticizing their social and cultural differences. In this context, efforts that bring local culture into the national mass media often foreground particular performances—such as the hunters’ musicians—while also producing new means for standardizing and evaluating authenticity. Schulz argues that, in Mali, the logics of ethnocommodification (and incorporation) permeate even though not under the sign of ethnicity.

What local culture is here remains highly contested. For one thing, as people come to be involved in its performance, tensions emerge between, on the one hand, the state’s attempts to foreground ideologically a nonethnic local culture and, on the other hand, an uneven geopolitical distribution of the concrete contents of that which is included in the category of culture. There is more focus, we learn, on traditions from southern Mali, for example, and much less on northern peoples, like the Tuareg. In the production of local culture, Schulz argues, difference also requires practices to undergo processes of *standardization, selection, and adaptation* to mass media and market dynamics. Yet these processes make cultural difference ambivalent, an ambivalence also attenuated by the fact that the homogenous population it is seen to depict does not exist as such. Meanwhile, performers and audiences themselves contest the authenticity of hunters’ musicians along lines of generation, aesthetic corruption by commercialization, and fear over the possibility of cultural depletion. Schulz argues that, while the state seeks to reassert its power of horizontal integration through the ideology of local culture, the tensions associated with its geopolitics and ethnoculturalities also undermine this possibility.

A few important observations emerge from the juxtapositions of these case studies. They all demonstrate how, first, the production of cultural difference involves complex, mostly asymmetrical sociologies, in which government officials, local elites, and ethnopreneurs play distinct, sometimes conflicting roles. If in Mali and among the Bafokeng, the ruling regime plays a central role in sanctioning authenticity, in other contexts described throughout this book, ethnicity, inc. projects emerge through local elites or from below, at

times supported, at times foreclosed by the state. Second, the means through which difference is produced and circulated are growingly globalized. They involve mass media, advertising campaigns, television shows, documentary films, books, and social media, among other things. These prevailing means of constructing and narrating difference invite everyone, in an imagined global public, to share the same ground, as it were, for viewing and consuming difference, assessing its authenticity, and determining its value. Third, this inevitably leads to loci of difference that are more and more about similar things, including bodies, clothes, dances, music, narratives about the past, and whatever else might be easily recognizable as “culture.” Fourth, and most importantly, despite the growing globalization of the means of producing difference, difference remains an uncertain quality, ridden with ambivalence and ambiguities. In this context, contestations of hegemonic formations of identity and alterity dialectically produce competing attempts to claim, own, and defend culture from commercialization and vulgarization. Those not directly engaged in it are nonetheless in conversation with it—not so much questioning its means and purposes as the particularities of its contents.

Absences, Specters, Margins

The last two chapters of our volume theorize from these margins of ethnicity, inc.—that is, from contexts in which it is violently contained or, simply, manifests itself as a path not taken, abandoned, stalled, or deferred. If ethnicity, inc. has the potential to both animate and annihilate, both to empower and to marginalize, the circumstances that allow for one set of potentialities to materialize over another are not equally manifest in all places at all times. In some places, only few people have access to the means of ethnoincorporation or cultural commodification. With the rise of the security state, military interventions, and moral securitization as central modalities of governmentality (Amar 2013), ruling regimes may prevent the emergence of ethnobusiness and ethnocommons. How then can we expand our understanding of ethnic commodification and incorporation from contexts in which these processes do not happen as we might expect them to? What can we learn from situations in which the state works to suppress the assertion of cultural difference? And how can we think of the *limits* and *failures* of ethnicity, inc. more generally?

Sara Shneiderman (chap. 7) shows how, in Nepal, it was initially a desire for national integration and more direct participation in state politics that determined the objectification of ethnic identity and not so much a desire to assert sovereignty against the state. Yet the failures of such quests for full citizenship have had surprising outcomes. Marginal pan-ethnic groups, such as the

Madhesi and the Janajati, have sought state recognition as ethnoterritorial entities. In recent years, Madhesi and Janajati activists hoped that upcoming constitutional reforms would allow them to overcome their long-standing exploitation at the hand of elites. Janajati hoped to move toward an “identity-based federalism,” while Madhesi hoped to break free from the control of high-caste Hindu nationalists. At the same time, however, the latter sought to suppress expressions of ethnicity. Following the promulgation of a new constitution in 2015, political elites and state leaders succeeded in reconsolidating a conservative state structure, further marginalizing the Madhasi and the Janajati. But while the new constitution kept high-caste Hindu majorities in the leadership of each province—thus solidifying elite strategies to appropriate land—marginal indigenous groups actually became aware that their identity was vested in territory.

At first, Madhesi and Janajati groups tried to have their difference recognized by government. But unlike the Janajati who had stronger ties to elites, the state saw the Madhesi as culturally more alike to Indians than Nepalis—or, in other words, not sufficiently different from Nepal’s neighbors to represent its ethnonational identity. When Shneiderman asked one of her Madhesi interlocutors why they did not commodify their culture for tourists, he said: “How can we try that when anything we do is seen to be Indian?” The state here played a central role in legitimizing manifestations of ethnic identity and cultural difference. Yet, as the elite hijacking of the new constitution crushed the hopes of indigenous ethnic activists, suddenly, among Madhesi, a desire emerged to assert cultural difference in new ways, often against the state. “It’s only now that we have been rejected as Nepali by this constitution,” one informant told Shneiderman, “that we are freely claiming our own culture.” In this case, the potential for ethnicity, inc.—which is yet to be realized among Madhesi—emerges precisely out of the failures of citizenship and disappointment with the state.

Eve Darian-Smith (chap. 8) argues that new social and political dynamics in the global order make the annihilating potentialities of ethnicity, inc. more likely to realize themselves in most parts of the world. Focusing on the case of Australian Aborigines under violent forms of state intervention, militarization, and land alienation, she shows how these people, like asylum seekers, serve as targets of domination meant to uphold a form of nationalism premised on white supremacy. Driven by rising international inequalities, an intensified displacement of people (refugees, migrants), and militarization of state, there emerges a context in which, Darian-Smith argues, “increasingly marginalized people of the world have less, not more, access and opportunity to take advantage of the manifestations and implications of ethnicity, inc.” Ethnicity, inc. is not

absent in such contexts, but very present in its spectral form, as a fantasy, an abandoned trajectory, a path not pursued.

Starting in the 1970s, for example, indigenous dot painting became an important medium through which Aboriginal people commodified their culture. Throughout the following two decades, dot painting quickly became emblematic of Australian indigenous people, generating a large market that involved, among other things, a government-sponsored company, indigenous artists cooperatives, and NGOs supporting art centers. However, not only did indigenous people quickly realize that they could not control the interpretation of their work in the national and international arenas, but colonial stereotypes of indigeneity have also worked to legitimize ideologically violent state interventions that have come to reduce the possibility of empowerment through ethnicity. Since 2007, for example, the Australian federal government has initiated the so-called Northern Territory National Emergency Response, an emergency program deploying exceptional forms of governance in Aboriginal communities. Claiming to respond to allegations of sexual abuse and neglect of Aboriginal children, the state called up the military to control Aboriginal people, altered welfare services and land tenure regulations to their detriment, and thus limited the economic resources and political rights of these communities. Darian-Smith argues that “both permanent Afghani detainees and impoverished Aboriginal communities share a common future in Australia in that both must be kept out of sight and out of mind under policies of neocolonial management.” Efforts to keep indigenous people “out of sight and mind” prevent them from achieving empowerment through the commodification of their culture, or indeed, ethnicity, inc. more generally.

What these examples suggest is that there are numerous, different paths into—or, indeed, *around*—ethnicity, inc. Most importantly, they show that this phenomenon need not manifest itself in its most identifiable forms—immediate commodification or incorporation—to be *present*, as a *real* potentiality, in any particular context. Therefore, ethnicity, inc. also resides as a *specter*: that is, as a path-not-yet-taken, a path-abandoned or deferred, a fantasy of worlds built otherwise. And, in all these instances, it nevertheless exists as a possibility objectified in language and practice, in relation to which people imagine other livelihoods, other futures.

NOTES

1. Our attention has been drawn to the fact that the term *incorporation* does not imply “constituting a company, city, or other organization as a

legal corporation" in many languages other than English (i.e., in addition to meaning "inclusion of something as part of a whole"; Peter Geschiere, personal communication).

2. Witness the insistence of the likes of Wilbur Ross, secretary of commerce to Donald Trump, that "economic security is military security" and hence valorizes all sorts of (political) action under its sign. See Martin Kettle, "Trump's Trade War Threatens Global Peace," *The Guardian*, June 2, 2018, 5.

3. Significantly for present purposes, these and other studies on the topic were published together, under Colloredo-Mansfield's (2011) editorship, as a special issue of *Anthropology of Work Review*, under the title "Work, Cultural Resources, and Community Commodities in the Global Economy."

4. See "Geographical Indications," World Intellectual Property Organization, accessed July 24, 2018, http://www.wipo.int/geo_indications/en/.

5. Gregory Warner, "How One Kenyan Tribe Produces the World's Best Runners," *Parallels*, November 1, 2013, <https://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2013/11/01/241895965/how-one-kenyan-tribe-produces-the-worlds-best-runners>.

6. Douglas Todd, "The Rapid Growth of Ethnic Economies," *Vancouver Sun*, February 19, 2018, <https://vancouversun.com/news/staff-blogs/the-rapid-growth-of-ethnic-economies>. The definition of "ethnic economies" offered in the report, as well as the term itself, was taken from Light and Gold (2000).

7. The complex, ambivalent relationship between the rise of thanatourism—aka disaster, dark, and grief tourism—and heritage tourism has garnered a growing literature in recent years; see, for example, Hartmann (2014) and Light (2017).

8. That is, at the time of writing *Ethnicity, Inc.* (see 16–18).

9. This quip was part of a conference talk, "What Is a Nation?," delivered at the Sorbonne on March 11, 1882. An online copy can be found at http://ucparis.fr/files/9313/6549/9943/What_is_a_Nation.pdf.

10. Tim Haughton, "It's the Slogan, Stupid: The Brexit Referendum," *Perspectives*, accessed May 24, 2018, <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/perspective/eu-ref-haughton.aspx>. Those in favor of leaving the EU noted that they sought control over "our money and our economic policy."

11. Samanth Subramanian, "How to Sell a Country: The Booming Business of Nation Branding," *The Guardian*, November 24, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/audio/2017/nov/24/how-to-sell-a-country-the-booming-business-of-nation-branding-podcast>.

12. This is the contentious motto of the right-wing party, Alternative for Germany (AfD).

13. In *Ethnicity, Inc.* a number of early examples of this—among them, one remarkable one from Kenya (125–26)—were already put forward.

14. Of these, the last two are the least well-known internationally. Mark Rutte, three-time prime minister of the Netherlands, had been an executive in Unilever and a number of its subsidiaries before taking office; Tihomir Orešković became head of state in Croatia in 2016, having been CEO of his nation's largest pharmaceutical company and head of financial management for Teva, a multinational pharma. Of course, a number of US presidents before Donald Trump had been businessmen, but, unlike him, they had political careers before being elected.

15. It was in this sense, rather than the simple reduction of Nationality, Inc. to marketing (*pace* Surak 2010, 157), that the issue of nation branding was discussed in *Ethnicity, Inc.* (117).

16. Noam Chomsky, "Free Market Fantasies: Capitalism in the Real World," lecture delivered at Harvard University, April 13, 1996, <https://chomsky.info/19960413/>.

17. Subramanian, "How to Sell a Country."

18. "The image and reputation of countries can be a real deal maker—or breaker. How your country and nation is perceived by overseas audiences has implications for your success as destination, your economic development, public diplomacy and talent attraction," notes a report titled "Country Brands: 2017 Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Study Reveals Winners, Losers and Trends." The report highlights features like the "welcoming . . . progress in world's image of Latin American nations, a region that experienced decades of turmoil and now making strides towards progress and stability" (*The Place Brand Observer*, November 22, 2017, <https://placebrandobserver.com/anholt-gfk-nation-brands-index-2017-highlights>).

19. See Anholt-GfK Nation Brands Index, accessed June 5, 2018, <https://nation-brands.gfk.com/>.

20. The World Economic Forum offers a chart of "Countries Where You Can Buy Citizenship," replete with details of prevailing prices (starting at \$100,000), residency requirements (often none), and qualifying period (also often none). It is striking how the number of these countries has risen since 2011 (Joe Myers, "Countries Where You Can Buy Citizenship," World Economic Forum, July 28, 2016, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/07/countries-selling-citizenship>).

21. Subramanian, "How to Sell a Country." See also "Cape Verde Holidays," SAGA, accessed June 20, 2018, <https://travel.saga.co.uk/holidays/destinations/africa/cape-verde.aspx?>; "Belong: St Kitts and Nevis," *High Life* (British Airways), June 2018, 35.

22. Subramanian, "How to Sell a Country."

23. Naomi Klein, "America Is Not a Hamburger," *The Guardian*, March 14, 2002, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2002/mar/14/marketingandpr.comment>.

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