German Co-determination and Migrant Integration at Industrial Workplaces

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1. Research questions

This contribution examines the attitudes and the behavior of German and migrant employees at industrial workplaces in Germany. In particular, the paper deals with the role workplace industrial relations play in fostering social integration of German and migrant employees. It will be suggested that German co-determination encourages employees to constitute themselves as a homogeneous workforce rather than as particular groups of different origin.

Studies dealing with social integration of migrant workers at the workplace are rare in Germany. This lack of interest may result from the circumstance that the political public has recognized only lately that Germany has become a country of immigration. Hitherto, the situation of former 'guest-workers' at the workplace seemed not to be of much societal importance because they were seen as foreigners who would stay only temporarily (Werner, 2001). As has become obvious by now, this was a false prognosis. Moreover, the fact that only few conflicts between migrant and domestic workers occurred may have contributed to researchers' neglect of the topic. The workplace is apparently neither a good field for demonstrating a lack of willingness on the part of migrants to integrate themselves into German society nor a good example to unveil racist tendencies among Germans. However, the assumption that in Germany there are seemingly less integration problems at work than in society as a whole should be no reason to abstain from research because this circumstance offers a chance to detect effective mechanisms of social integration.

Beyond a lack of interest, there also may be theoretical reasons for the research desideratum. Personnel economics and, to some degree, the sociology of work and industrial relations (IR)-research are dedicated to an ambitious concept of material interest (Müller-Jentsch, 2002) that leaves little theoretical room for identity issues. This restriction, in particular, applies to identities and social recognition based on categories other than social position. Recently, however, there seems to be a growing awareness of identity issues in work-related research (e.g. Akerlof and Kranton, 2010 for economics), and in German IR research more attention is paid to social recognition (Bahnmüller and Schmidt, 2009; Kuhlmann and Schmidt, 2011). However, although the theoretical obstacles have become smaller, research about the social integration of employees with heterogeneous origin is still rare.

Despite the fact that in Germany there are only a few research studies on the topic, their findings often differ fundamentally. Whereas Flam (2007) detects workplaces full of racism (see also the older studies Hergesell, 1994; Freyberg, 1994), Bischoff et al. (2009) observe tolerant relationships between German and migrant employees. The study of Kartari (1997) is very sensitive to intercultural misunderstanding, but shows a tendency to explain all difficulties as results of deficient cultural knowledge. The variance of findings may partially result from the circumstance that the studies had been conducted in different industrial sectors. However, sometimes political concerns seem to play a role as well. The growing body of diversity management literature often is of normative nature too. One of the rare exceptions is the diversity study of Ortlieb and Sieben (2008; 2010) which examines companies in Ber-

lin and their diversity strategies from a less normative perspective (Ortlieb and Sieben, 2008; 2010).

Birsl et al. (1999; 2003) and French et al. (2003), drawing on in-depth case study evidence from a German Volkswagen plant (partly compared with automotive plants in other countries), suggest that their "findings do provide limited evidence to suggest that racial tensions may exist", and point to the relevance of connecting the issue of workplace integration with IR research. As the 'main conclusion of the report', they state "that union presence and influence in the workplace are central to the implementation, enforcement and acceptance of equal opportunities policies" (French et al., 2003: 52-54; see also Hinken, 2001). Our paper takes up this point, and investigates its relevance and its mode of operation in a German IR-context.

Moreover, there is literature on migration that, although it does not refer to German IR and workplaces and we do not directly draw on in this paper, shall be mentioned at this point because it has fostered our understanding of the migration issue (e.g. Portes and Zhou, 1993; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001; Rumbaut, 2003; Alba and Nee, 2003; Esser, 2003; Pries, 2003). The literature as a whole was helpful to shape the design of the project and to address the right questions, nevertheless, considering the insufficient state of research the limits for building well-founded hypotheses were narrow.

For our own approach, firstly, the assumption that not only the opinions of employees, but also their day-to-day interaction should be taken into consideration when investigating workplace integration is important. Allport's (1954) well-known, albeit disputed position that contact between groups reduces prejudices (also see: Robinson and Preston, 2001; Connolly, 2000; Hewstone and Brown, 1986) points to the fact that opinions influence not only action but, vice versa, action influences opinions as well. The sociology of emotions has demonstrated that working conditions and regular interaction influence emotions (Hochschild, 1983); this mechanism even works if an employee does not intend to have these emotions.

A condition for researching the relations between employees of diverse origin is, secondly, a theoretical approach which demands the inclusion of interests and social inequality on the one side and collective identities resulting from political or cultural reasons on the other. Although history has shown the (destructive) power of ideologies focused on race and ethnicities not least in Germany, German IR research mostly still neglects the relevance of identities and refers theoretically to social positions and interests solely. Although terms like 'ethnicity' should be used with caution and be regarded as socially constructed and not as essentialistic, identities cannot be ignored if interaction and group relations were to be understood. A dual perspective that keeps in mind both interest *and* social recognition seems to be an appropriate approach for researching the issue of migrant integration at industrial workplaces (Fraser, 1997, 1998, 2000; Schmidt, 2005; Voswinkel, 2012).

Our third assumption refers to the basic knowledge that 'social structure' and 'social action' are interrelated. We expected that the character of social relations between employees is not independent of the social structure of the company (i.e. the incorporation of employees of heterogeneous descent in the internal status system). Internal and external rules and institu-

tions, we assumed, have a relevant impact. In particular, the so-called 'German model of IR'[1] should shape the social interaction between employees in a specific way.

In accordance with these assumptions three general issues will be examined.

First, we shall analyze the *social structure* of the companies in question. It will be shown that employees' positions within the companies' social structures correlate with the question of whether an employee has a German or a migration background.

Second, we will look into day-to-day *social interaction* between employees of different origin. It will be suggested that although discrimination and harassment of migrants do take place at the investigated workplaces, albeit comparably seldom, it is collegiality which predominantly characterizes the interaction of workers with and without migration background.

Third, *workplace industrial relations* (i.e. the articulation of interests by employees and the institutions of co-determination) will be examined. We will argue that the German system of co-determination plays an important role for the social integration of employees of different origin.

2. The empirical basis

Our analysis is empirically based on a research project, which was funded by the Hans-Böckler-Foundation and carried out in 2005 (Schmidt, 2006a, 2006b, 2007). In the course of this project we conducted three intensive case studies in manufacturing. Two of the cases were in the metalworking industry (Company A and Company B), the third case in the chemical industry (Company C). Companies A and B produce electronic modules whereas Company C was a producer of car tires. The investigated workplaces employed 500, 700 and 1700 employees. All three companies were owned by foreign multinationals. Companies A and B were formerly parts of a big German company but belonged at the date of research to two multinational companies (MNCs) with headquarters in the USA. Company C was a subsidiary of a French MNC.

Although foreign owned, managerial labor and personnel politics, workplace industrial relations, as well as pay and conditions of these companies were rather typical for German manufacturing industries. For example, in companies A and C team working with team spokespersons was implemented. In Company A this mode of operation was called 'democratic teamwork' and speakers were elected by the groups themselves. In Company C the practice was more controlled from the top and speakers were appointed by line managers. Company B abstained from working in groups and having speakers but extensively used components of functional flexibility, which are often connected with teamwork.

All three companies had elected works councils that included members who were of foreign origin (which is normally the case). The works councils maintained close connections to their particular sectoral trade unions: The IG Metall (Industrial Union of Metalworkers) in the cases A and B and the IG BCE (Mining, Chemical and Energy Industrial Union) in the third case. In all three cases a sectoral agreement was applied and most works councilors

[1] For introductive literature to the 'German model of IR' see Baethge and Wolf (1995); Müller-Jentsch and Weitbrecht (2003); for public services: Keller (1999).

were trade union members.[2] The relations between works councils and management were cooperative in all cases, nevertheless, all works councils were playing a more or less self-confident role.

In all three companies a relatively large minority of employees had foreign citizenship: the proportion of manual workers with foreign citizenship was 34.3 per cent (Company A), 26.2 per cent (Company B), and 23.2 per cent (Company C); the numbers of non-manual employees who had foreign citizenship were considerably lower with 4.8 per cent, 4.3 per cent, and 8.2 per cent respectively. In addition to employees with foreign citizenship there was, on average, about the same proportion of employees who had a migration background and held German citizenship. Employees with a migrant background thus played a significant role in all three companies. Altogether, the investigated cases resemble a core of German manufacturing industries, whereas they are rather atypical for small companies and for the service sector. We assume that our findings are relatively typical for large and medium-sized German manufacturing companies.

For our case studies we combined qualitative with quantitative research methods. We conducted interviews with employers and works councilors, as well as interviews and group discussions with employees, analyzed company statistics, and carried out employee attitude surveys using questionnaires. The research design integrates varying methods in order to reduce one-sidedness and to display various perspectives on the subject. Thus, by including surveys in our qualitative case studies approach, we were able to quantify the qualitative data for our three cases.

The case studies are based on 28 one-on-one interviews with employees of whom 17 were migrants, 11 women, and 15 manual workers. Beyond this, several expert interviews were led with works councilors and representatives of the companies and 10 group discussions with 53 employees of whom 33 were migrants and 27 were female. Altogether we talked with 93 persons in 47 interviews and group discussions. All conversations were conducted by one of the authors and were digitally recorded and transcribed. Whereas the interviews with company representatives and works councilors were partly structured with the aid of guidelines, the interviews with employees had a more narrative character. The participants of group discussions were encouraged to describe their experiences and to freely discuss the issues in question. The intention was to grasp typical experiences and patterns of interpretation from an employee's perspective.

The interviews were conducted with employees with both German and foreign backgrounds. The groups for the group discussions were selected to have different compositions. Some discussions were carried out with participants who shared the same background in order to give them the freedom to speak uninhibitedly about 'the others'. Other groups were mixed in order to get an impression of the encounter of employees from different backgrounds. The interpretation of the interviews and group discussions was carried out in two steps. Firstly, we divided each transcription into text sequences and examined them with reference to the interviewees (personal approach). In a second step, we arranged sequences from all inter-

[2] Works councils are elected representatives of a workplace's labor force, based on the Works Constitution Act (*Betriebsverfassungsgesetz*), and are distinct from trade unions. Nonetheless, individual works councilors are often trade union members, and in many cases works councils and trade unions work closely together.

view transcriptions along thematic criteria, which were derived from the research questions or in an inductive way (thematic approach).

In addition to interviews and group discussions, employee attitude surveys were conducted in the three companies. Although our questionnaire was quite comprehensive with its 120 variables, we could reach a satisfactory response rate (for the size of the samples and the response rates see Table 1). In Companies A and C the questionnaires were distributed by the personnel management and in Company C by the works council. The questionnaire was in German language only, as requested by the companies according to whom the employees were proficient in German. From our experiences onsite as well as our surveys, we had the impression that this assessment was by and large correct. Although 85 per cent of all respondents with a migrant background were not born in Germany, many grew up in Germany and about half of them specify Germany as the country where they have earned their highest educational degree.

Table 1: Samples and response rates of the employee attitude surveys

Company	A	B	C	Total
Workforce (population)	500	700	1700	2900
Sample	345	320	600	1265
Response	125	128	300	553
Response rate	36.2%	40.0%	50.0%	43.7%
Response rate in relation to workforce	25.0%	18.3%	17.6%	19.1%

Of the respondents, 65 per cent were of German origin, 32 per cent were of foreign origin. Less than two per cent of the respondents had mixed German-foreign descent and about the same proportion of respondents could not be assigned to any of these categories. If respondents or their parents were born in a foreign country, we consider them to have a migration background, independently of their citizenship. We abstained from defining migrants on the basis of an assignment to ethnic groups. Referring to ethnic identity would cause the problem that highly assimilated migrants with a self-conception as Germans would statistically disappear from the category ‘migrant’. In consequence, the possibility of swift assimilation would be excluded per definition. As Table 2 shows, when comparing samples and populations, there are only slight deviations concerning citizenship, manual/non-manual, and gender. These deviations had been further reduced by weighting the sample for these criteria.

Completed with information from company statistics (including status and pay grades), qualitative and quantitative data were – as far as possible – cross-examined and ‘triangulated’ to correct one-sidedness, to fill in gaps, and to get an integrated picture. This process shows that the findings we derived from the different methods applied were not contradictory and suggests that, in the overall view, the picture we draw is quite accurate, however, despite

using various methods, the results remain case study findings (i.e. they are not representative of the German economy).

Table 2: Percentages of foreigners, all migrants, manual workers, and women in population and sample
(sample not weighted, percentages)

Company	A		B		C	
	Population[a]	Sample	Population[a]	Sample	Population[a]	Sample
Foreigners[b]	24	23	14	13	21	21
All migrants[c]	–	37	–	41	–	25
Manual workers	58	62	37	49	88	71
Women	55	53	36	38	4	4

[a] Population data from company statistics
[b] Migrants without German citizenship
[c] Persons with a migration background with or without German citizenship

3. Social structure

The examination of the companies' pay structures reveals that whereas only a few employees with foreign citizenship[3] work in administration or in research and development, many are employed as manual workers (see Table 3). Figure 1 demonstrates (exemplified by Company C, which had a single status system for both manual and non-manual employees) that foreigners are more likely to work as unskilled and semi-skilled manual workers than those with German citizenship. This finding also applies to Companies A and B, and coincides by and large with representative statistics for Germany (IAB, 2009: 289).

Migrants who work as qualified non-manual employees often have a different background than those in production. In production work we typically find the so-called 'guest-workers' who once had followed the big migration streams from Southern Europe and Turkey, and later from Eastern Europe, or their descendants (pattern of collective migration). Highly skilled foreigners often come from Western Europe or the USA. Some of them are delegates from headquarters or from other subsidiaries in Europe or overseas ('expatriates'), others follow an individual and often temporary strategy to gain professional experience abroad (pattern of individual migration). The link between the migration pattern and the position of migrants within the social structure of the company indicates that factors other than the mere distinction between Germans and foreigners are of relevance for the positioning within the

[3] The statistics of the investigated companies use only the categories 'German citizenship' and 'foreign citizenship', but not 'migration background' (cp. Table 2).

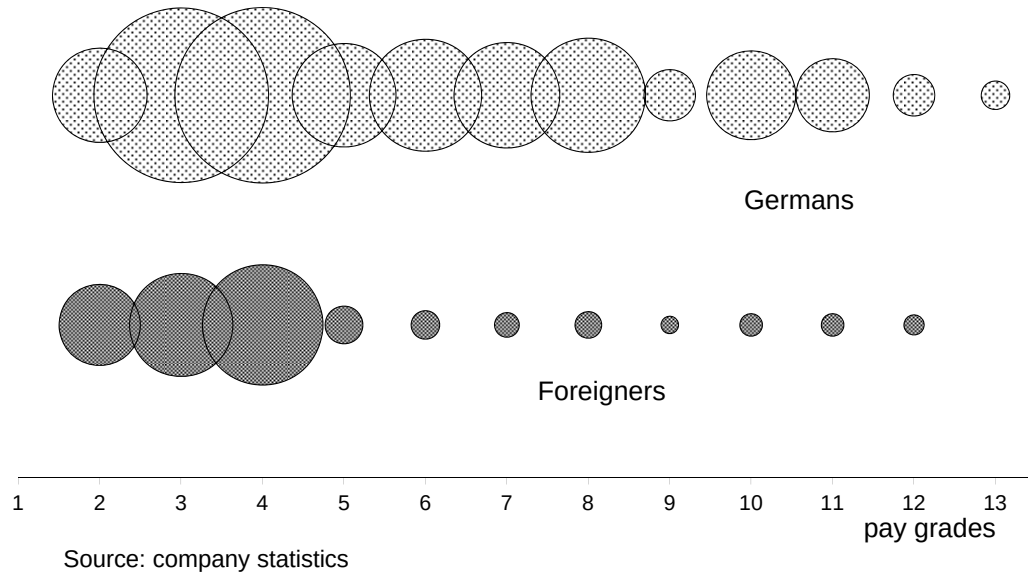
company hierarchy. Qualification differences and the incorporation mode at the point of arrival shape the further course of integration (often not only for the first generation).

Table 3: Proportion of foreigners among manual and non-manual workers
(percentages)

	Manual workers			Non-manual workers		
Company	A	B	C	A	B	C
Foreigners	34.3	26.2	23.2	4.8	4.3	8.2

Source: company statistics

Figure 1: Pay structure (manual and non-manual workers) of Company C: Germans and foreigners
(all employees, percentages)



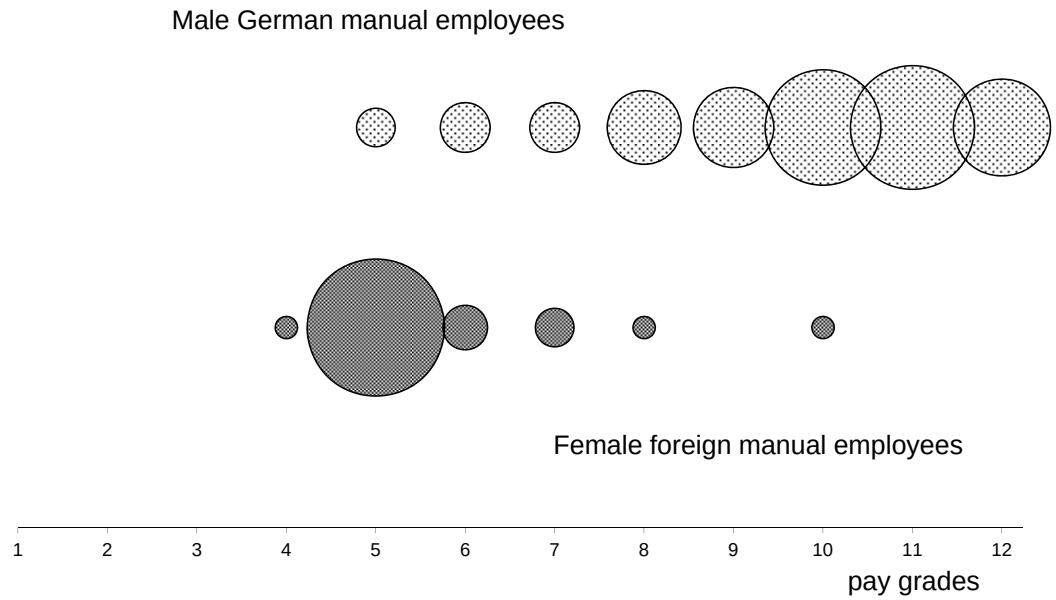
Source: company statistics

Although we will not go into further details, a single hint on the intersection of migration and gender shall be given: Figure 2 shows, in the example of Company B, that whereas most female foreign manual workers are employed as semi-skilled workers, German male manual

workers mainly belong to pay grades for skilled workers (employees above wage group 7 are considered skilled workers).

However, although the impact of foreign background for positioning on the pay scale seems to be statistically obvious, little evidence exists for the assumption that there is a connection between wage classification and discrimination based on national or ethnic origin. Asked whether their own pay grades differ from those of their colleagues who do the same work, employees with and without a migration background arrive at quite similar results: Whereas the majority of both groups states that their colleagues have neither a better nor a worse pay grade than the respondents themselves, a minority of the respondents believes that they are paid worse, and a small minority states they are paid better than others. In Company C, more Germans than migrants assume that they are paid worse (see Table 4).

Figure 2: Pay structure (manual workers) of Company B: German males and foreign females
(manual employees, percentages)



Source: company statistics

These figures do not falsify the finding of harsh inequalities in status and income between German and migrant employees, but they show that these inequalities do not, or only marginally, result from discriminating grading decisions. Three points are important. First, in all three companies sectoral agreements require a rule-guided matching of job and pay; company or single line managers therefore have little room of maneuver regarding the employees' pay. Second, the point of reference for grading decisions is the job and not the person (job evaluation). Of course, to assume that apart from the working tasks themselves there are no other factors which influence pay decisions would overestimate the accuracy of

the sectoral agreement's application. It is known that seniority, loyalty and so on also influence pay decisions. Nevertheless, regulated job evaluation remains at the core of the grading decision (Bahnmüller and Schmidt, 2009). Last but not least, works councils have to examine pay decisions in order to ensure compliance with the collective agreement.

Table 4: "Do you think that your wage grade is better or worse than that of other colleagues with the same work?"
(percentages and mean)

Company	A		B		C	
	Germans	Migrants	Germans	Migrants	Germans	Migrants
Much better (1)	0.0	1.6	0.0	5.5	0.6	1.8
Rather better (2)	12.9	7.0	4.5	13.7	6.0	11.6
Neither … nor (3)	60.5	69.8	67.5	41.6	58.6	59.7
Rather worse (4)	21.0	13.6	20.6	27.0	30.3	23.4
Much worse (5)	5.6	8.1	7.4	12.1	4.4	3.6
Mean	*3.19*	*3.19*	*3.31*	*3.27*	**3.32*	**3.15*

Significant differences of mean between both groups within companies are given.
Source: weighted survey.

On closer examination, the unequal allocation of jobs to Germans and migrants is primarily not a consequence of discriminatory practices in the companies but a reflection of differences in vocational training. If comparable vocational training is given, weak discrimination can be found at the workplace at the most. Migrant employees in positions for un-/semi-skilled workers as well as in positions for skilled manual workers ('*Facharbeiter*') are not as well trained as their German colleagues working in comparable jobs (see Table 5). Therefore, although migrants are less trained (which may result from external discrimination) and fill lower positions within the examined companies there is no, or at most inverted, discrimination to detect concerning the matching of training and job. This corresponds with a statement of Company C's personnel manager, saying that for semi-skilled positions (only) Germans are usually expected to have completed vocational training.

However, although the inequality in job and status between Germans and migrants seems to originate primarily from the societal environment, externally caused differences continue to have effects within the companies. Differences in qualification get translated into differences in the allocation of jobs. Additionally, the figures given in Table 5 show that despite migrants being less trained than Germans in comparable positions they do have a better school education. Whereas for the majority of Germans a completion of Secondary school is considered sufficient for a skilled manual job, the majority of migrants in comparable positions hold an Intermediate school or High school degree. Obviously, it is markedly easier for school leavers with a German background to convert school education into vocational training than it is for young migrants. The border between school and vocational training is less

permeable for migrants. This means that discrimination occurs not only in the societal environment, but also at the threshold between the societal environment and the companies which offer vocational training.

4. Social relations

In accordance with statements from personnel managers, works councilors, and German employees, migrants see their incorporation into lower paid segments of the internal social structure primarily as a result of insufficient qualification, and not as a result of pay discrimination. A more general question, asking for the frequency of discrimination in the companies, displays that discrimination occurs but most migrants report that they '*never*' or '*seldom*' experienced disadvantages due to their descent (see Table 6).

Table 5: Completed vocational training and school education for manual workers (all companies, percentages)

Job position and vocational training					**Job position and school education**				
Job position / Vocational training	Un-/semi-skilled		Skilled		Job position / School education	Un-/semi-skilled		Skilled	
	Germans	Migrants	Germans	Migrants		Germans	Migrants	Germans	Migrants
None	14.9	39.4	0.0	10.5	None	0.0	10.0	1.2	2.4
Vocational training (VT), ('*Lehre*')	84.3	58.8	97.7	89.5	Secondary school ('*Hauptschule*')	77.7	49.5	69.8	37.8
- applicable VT	*24.0*	*23.9*	*90.7*	*68.4*	Intermediate school ('*Realschule*')	20.4	28.1	21.6	44.0
- inapplicable VT	*60.3*	*34.9*	*7.0*	*21.1*	High school ('*Gymnasium*')	2.0	10.8	7.4	13.4
Academic degree	0.8	1.8	2.3	0.0	Don't know	0.0	1.5	0.0	2.4

Source: weighted survey.

Depending on the observer's expectation, these figures may sound more or less negative, but in any case it seems to be inadequate to speak of widespread or severe experiences of internal discrimination. The narrations during the interviews and the group discussions back these figures. Everyday life at the workplace seems to be characterized by cooperation rather than by conflict between individuals of different origin particularly in Companies A and B. This also applies to Company C, even though groups of origin play a more important role than in

the other two companies. In all three companies the degree of cooperation exceeds one that could be enforced.

Table 6: "Do you have the feeling that you have been disadvantaged in your company because of your descent?"
(migrants only, percentages and mean)

Company	A	B	C
Never (1)	67.9	63.1	41.4
Seldom (2)	24.1	34.6	43.1
Often (3)	5.0	2.4	13.6
Almost daily (4)	3.0	0.0	1.9
Mean	*1.43*	*1.39*	*1.76*

Source: weighted survey.

We call this kind of social cooperation between migrant and autochthonous employees, which proved to be the prevalent one, 'pragmatic cooperation'. Concerning Company A and Company B, we speak of 'individual-based pragmatic cooperation', whereas regarding Company C we speak of 'group-based pragmatic cooperation'. The opportunity to form groups along descent is more pronounced in Company C as a consequence of its larger workforce and larger production teams. Both variants of 'pragmatic cooperation' are more than 'cooperation-to-rule' and more than a result of mere rational calculation.

An important ingredient of 'pragmatic cooperation' is the mutual recognition induced by day-to-day interaction in the working process. The functional requirements of the working process alone, however, do not guarantee mutual recognition. The history of labor knows numerous examples where the functional requirements of production and discriminating practices coexisted (Tilly and Tilly, 1998). Thus, mutual recognition emerges probably only if it is provided that all employees, independent of their origin, work under the same employment conditions.

Allport (1954: 281) suggested that prejudices "may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals. The effect is greatly enhanced if this contact is sanctioned by institutional support (i.e., by law, custom or local atmosphere), and provided it is a sort that leads to the perception of common interests and common humanity between members of the two groups". These conditions are approximately fulfilled in our case companies: internal rules and the expectations of management aim at fostering cooperative action, and most employees who work together on a daily basis have a similar status. Common objectives in organizations are not only regarded as necessary for the working process, but employees mostly also identify with these objectives. Finally, because in the companies examined employees of different national or ethnic origin often work closely together for a long period of time, an additional condition, which Pettigrew (1998) sees as necessary for inducing the positive effects of contacts, is fulfilled.

However, our findings suggest that practices of interaction are more on an equal footing and of nondiscriminatory nature than persisting prejudices would suggest. Some conclusions from Hochschild's (1983) famous study about 'the managed heart' may help to resolve this apparent contradiction. Cooperation and everyday contact at the workplace require employees to recurrently express their emotions in a verbal or nonverbal way. The endeavor to give just the outward appearance of being a good colleague evokes actual emotions of collegiality. Following Hochschild, we call this a process of 'deep acting'. In order to mitigate cognitive dissonances resulting from discrepancies between role expressive acting and pre-existent emotions, the latter get adapted and remodeled little by little into feelings adequate to the work role. This adjustment process reduces over time the discrepancy between a true and a false self, which otherwise would, as Hochschild has diagnosed, become a burden for the individuals.

The process of 'deep acting' can hardly be deliberately avoided. Partly, one could say, this process goes on 'behind the back' of the persons. However, its outcome depends on the weight and the unambiguousness of the role expectations at the workplace as well as on the width of the gap to be bridged between these expectations and the employees' pre-existent attitudes and emotions. Thus, if companies abstain from demanding that their staff behave in a kindly manner, or the resentments and prejudices of employees are very pronounced and deep-rooted, the emergence of 'pragmatic cooperation' can fail.

In our cases, not every single employee participates in this mode of interaction, although in all three companies 'pragmatic cooperation' prevails. A minority among German employees does not speak highly about 'foreigners'. Occasionally, they show their distance with jokes and jibes. We had been told about such jokes particularly in Company C. Our surveys confirm these findings from the interviews (see Table 7).[4] However, when autochthonous employees are asked about migrants in general and not about their opinion on their colleagues of different origin the answers get more negative.

This result corresponds with the 'contact theory' according to which one could expect that employees with a lower status develop more positive attitudes towards migrants than others, because most migrants are to be found in lower positions as well and contact occurs more frequently. Yet in contrast to this concept, common sense suggests that lower status is mostly concomitant with a lower educational level that fosters prejudices again. In accordance with this assumption, German manual workers' attitudes are on average more disapproving towards foreigners than those of all German employees of the companies examined (see Table 8). However, whether the level of education is actually the decisive reason for the occurrence of prejudices and discrimination against others is more uncertain than it may seem, because education, external labor market position, and the internal positions in the companies are intertwined. The history of German anti-Semitism shows that hostility against others is not necessarily connected with low education. Real or assumed competition on the labor market possibly may be of more relevance. Autochthons and migrants who work in similar jobs have a relation with a split character: Internally they are teammates, on the labor market they are competitors. This is particularly the case on the labor market for manual workers, where competition is currently more pronounced than in other segments.

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[4] This question was inspired by the study of Portes and Rumbaut (2001: 326), as well as the following one: "Because of your descent, does it happen that people in your workplace treat you as less competent or able than you deserve to be treated?" Migrants answered predominantly that this would occur "*never*" or "*seldom*" (Company A 90.4%, B 93.3%, C 83.9%).

Table 7: "**Does it happen that colleagues, assistants, or superiors make silly or negative remarks connected with your descent?"** (migrants only, percentages and mean)

Company	A	B	C***
Never (1)	66.0	64.0	37.3
Seldom (2)	23.1	36.0	36.5
Often (3)	8.0	0.0	24,3
Almost daily (4)	3.0	0.0	1.9
Mean	*1.48*	*1.36*	*1.91*

Companies A and B differ significantly from Company C.
Source: weighted survey.

Table 8: **Three statements about 'foreigners'**[a] (Germans only, percentages)

How do you rate the following statements?		I fully agree (1)	I rather agree (2)	neither … nor (3)	I rather disagree (4)	I fully disagree (5)	*Mean*
Unemployed foreigners should have to leave Germany.	all	15.4	19.0	29.4	21.2	15.0	*3.02*
	manual	18.5	24.3	30.1	17.2	9.9	****2.76*
So many foreigners make me anxious.	all	13.6	23.0	35.5	14.1	13.7	*2.91*
	manual	15.9	22.2	40.2	11.5	10.2	***2.78*
Many foreigners do not adapt enough in Germany.	all	31.2	48.5	12.9	5.0	2.5	*1.99*
	manual	35.1	45.4	13.2	3.2	3.1	*1.94*

[a] Colloquial for migrants
Significant differences are given for manual and non-manual employees.
Source: weighted survey.

Apart from such differences, we suggest that collegiality – although in the first instance often feigned – shows a tendency to become gradually real. Admittedly, this process has its spatial and temporal limits.

First, it should be emphasized that 'pragmatic cooperation' is neither an enthusiastic welcome to diversity nor an expression of complete assimilation. Only a minority of German employees expresses happiness with diversity, whereas a significantly higher number of migrant employees rate "*the fact that people from many different countries work in the company*" positive (Table 9).

Second, despite the described reduction of cognitive dissonances, contradictions between attitudes and emotions persist because individuals act at various social places. When leaving the workplace, employees are confronted with other role expectations, and outside the company they often have little contact with persons of other backgrounds. Although the German sociology of work observes a process of blurring the boundaries between the spheres of work and non-work, concerning the relations between employees of heterogeneous backgrounds the difference between internal interaction and behavior in privacy is still of relevance. 'Deep acting' works, but remains largely bound to the role and the social space of its emergence.

Table 9: "How do you rate the fact that people from many different countries work in the company?" (mean)

Company	**A**		**B**		**C**	
	Germans	Migrants	Germans	Migrants	Germans	Migrants
	manual employees					
Mean	***3.07	***1.97	**2.57	**2.00	***2.68	***1.94
	non-manual employees					
Mean	2.46	[a]2.11	2.32	2.24	2.34	[b]1.84

Items range from *1 = "very good"* to *5 = "very bad"*; displayed are significant differences for employees with and without migration background; [a] = *few cases ($n_{weighted} = n_{unweigthed} = 8$),* [b] = *few cases ($n_{weighted} = 6$, $n_{unweigthed} = 16$).*
*S*ource: weighted survey.

Quite frequently our interviewees referred to the difference between internal and external, the relevance of societal spheres, or, as they liked to say: internal and 'private', or, although less frequently, 'societal', as in the following quote:

> (The) world of work is another world than (the) societal world, where one lives afterwards in the family. (Migrant worker, Company B)

The threshold between the world of work and the private sphere limits not only the societal importance of 'pragmatic cooperation'-type relations, it also eases the requirements of cooperation within the workplace. Difference gets externalized. Not only resentments but cultural differences in general are regarded as a private matter, which does not belong to the world of work.

Third, because 'pragmatic cooperation' depends on specific conditions a change of the latter impedes its proper functioning. Interviewees told us about a few cases in which the 'pragmatic cooperation' of a specific group or a pair of employees temporarily collapsed (see Table 10). In most cases labor market competition played a role. In one case, for example, a

conflict arose because a better job had been given to a German worker and the career expectations of an employee with foreign origin were disappointed. In other cases, in consequence of extraordinary circumstances, employees exceptionally did not respect the boundary between internal and external when drawing on resentments of otherwise external discourses known from (boulevard) media, family, or peers in order to justify their own positions in internal conflicts.

If employees deviate from the practice of 'pragmatic cooperation' it could also be out of inexperience. Young or newly employed persons in particular can blunder into a situation in which they violate the boundary between the internal and external way of talking about migration issues. In one case, a group discussion in the context of our research induced such a violation.

Table 10: "Are there sometimes problems, misunderstandings, or conflicts between colleagues of German and foreign origin?"
(manual workers only, percentages and mean)

Company	A		B		C	
	Germans	Migrants	Germans	Migrants	Germans	Migrants
Never (1)	15.8	17.5	8.5	14.8	3.0	12.3
Seldom (2)	50.0	64.6	81.1	79.1	74.9	61.4
Often (3)	34.2	10.6	10.4	6.1	19.2	26.3
Almost daily (4)	0.0	7.3	0.0	0.0	3.0	0.0
Mean	*2.18*	*2.08*	*2.02*	*1.91*	*2.22*	*2.14*

Source: weighted survey.

Discussing the relations between employees of different origin, a young German worker first argued, in accordance with a widespread pattern of interpretation among employees, that "it always depends on the individual". Without doubt this contains some truth, but normally it also has the function to exclude the issue of cultural group differences from the internal discourse. Unaware of that function, the young employee proceeded within a group of employees of heterogeneous origin with statements from external discourses:

> Because, it always depends on (the behavior of) the individual person. Well, if I walk through (name of town) during the day, or a bigger city, let me say it this way, this may sound racist or whatever but, let me put it like this, one can see there are hardly any Germans on the street, but many foreigners[5]. (German worker, Company B)

Although the other attendees started to make objections, she goes on:

[5] In German colloquial language, the term 'foreigners' is often used for 'migrants'.

> (…) I often walk through the town and one can see there so many (…) often just Turks, speaking nearly no German, they don't have to work or do something else. They are loitering there all day long (…) (German worker, Company B)

Further objections from workers of foreign as well as German origin were not fully decoded by the young worker. After a sequence in which she differentiates between internal and external foreigners, which temporarily becalmed the other participants, she finally arrives at the message that it is necessary to pressure 'foreigners' to assimilate themselves to German society:

> I have nothing against – in quotation marks, it always sounds so pejorative too – foreigners, who go to another country in order to start a new life, to earn money, to work. (…) I myself work together with many foreigners – in quotation marks foreigners – without having any problems with them. But, I do have a problem with people who think, oh well, when I am in Germany, I get my money for nothing, I don't have to work here (…) (German worker, Company B)

> The way many Turks behave here in Germany/ If a German would behave this way in Turkey, he wouldn't survive the day, he would get shot dead. (German worker, Company B)

At that point, some of the other discussants got really angry and insisted on a change of subject. From that point on the young worker kept silence until the end of the group discussion. In other interviews the character of 'pragmatic cooperation' as a limited form of acceptance, which fully includes only colleagues at the workplace, is sometimes present. Interviewees emphasize that they abstain at work from rating the behavior of others at the private or societal sphere.

> (…) we are at work here, everyone knows what to do. And what happens in private life/ these are two entirely different things again. Whether someone's Turkish mother is wearing a headscarf or a coat, I really don't care. We are at work here, do our work here and that's it. The private sphere, what happens there/ there are many things I actually disagree with. However, that hasn't to do with (…) Yes, we are at work here (…) we get along with each other, and this is the main thing. (German worker, Company C)

To advise colleagues that they should not offend against the rule of keeping the internal and the private sphere separate, is generally considered a legitimate criticism. Noncompliance to this unwritten rule is often regarded to be responsible for the occurrence of all kinds of conflicts.

Sometimes, however, the separation of distinct spheres fails because of serious external conflicts. As such, interviewees reported that the wars in former Yugoslavia caused tensions among employees of Serbian and Croatian origin, and the terrorist attacks of 09/11 led to severe conflicts between German and Turkish employees. Then it seems, as one of our interviewees describes, as if a lever had been turned. The admission of external conflicts at the workplace can cause the collapse of 'pragmatic cooperation'. If this occurs, considerable efforts need to be made in order to repair collegiality. However, in our case companies such interruptions of 'pragmatic cooperation' happened only rarely.

In the case of a breakdown of 'pragmatic cooperation' most employees make efforts to revive it. An employee told us, for example, that if a conflict occurred, the workers would try to repair the damage to collegiality by purposefully behaving in an amicable way:

> And tomorrow again: 'Hi, how are you?', and so on. But, that is really meant this way. (…) Tomorrow, (he) still thinks the same, but it isn't so, that I wouldn't get along with him anymore. (…) But still, it is my feeling that their opinion persists. (…)
>
> If, for example, someone says today, this nation or this person is a great slacker, for example, yes. This is still there tomorrow, and this persists, I assume, forever (…) However, (…) I think, (to say) he is a great slacker, and that's it! That is an absolute no-go! (…) Not speaking with each other is not viable, but the opinion persists nevertheless. On the next day, we laugh, we laugh together, yes. But these different opinions or tensions are still there. (Migrant worker, Company C)

There are other employees, however, who describe the consequences of a damaged 'pragmatic cooperation' as being more far-reaching and lasting. Although employees (especially migrants) possess different cognitive strategies to lessen negative experiences, like singularizing the latter as exceptions, and behavioral tactics to sugarcoat as well as to deescalate conflicts, sometimes a rupture cannot be avoided. The mechanism of 'singularizing interpretation' (e.g. by claiming that a bad experience was an exception or that all people are different) loses ground then, and the opposite pattern of 'symptomatizing interpretation', which is to interpret negative incidents as symptoms of a larger problem, will gain importance. Once a switchover from one interpretation pattern to another has taken place, the issues at stake – even past ones – appear in a completely different light. Problems and conflicts, in the first instance considered to be exceptions, are then regarded as symptoms of a general hidden pattern of ethnic competition and discrimination, the tip of an iceberg.

One interviewee with a migrant background assumed that the resentment of German colleagues and line managers is far more pronounced than it appears to be. In his opinion, the resentment exists only beneath the surface, as ulterior motives. Our survey confirms the occurrence of hidden resentments (see Table 11). However, even though 'pragmatic cooperation' depends upon certain preconditions and can become precarious under certain circumstances, this form of collegiality is definitely the predominant mode of interaction in everyday work.

5. Workplace industrial relations

Two features of workplace industrial relations are of particular relevance for the relationship of employees of different origin. First, management and work councils agree in applying the same rules to all employees, irrespective of their origin. It therefore seems adequate to speak of universalistic rule application. Second, management and works councils reject and fight internal discrimination based on descent. Right wing extremism, xenophobia, or ethnic conflicts are not allowed. Little tolerance is shown towards violations of the principle of equal treatment and, if considered necessary, punitive measures can be taken. Such strong measures play no major role, though, and informal admonitions usually serve their purpose. Neither punishment nor admonitions are characteristic for everyday working life. However, similar to 'pragmatic cooperation', the proscription of discrimination is limited to the workplace. Equal treatment by company management and works councils and, consequently, the

interdiction of discrimination at the workplace can be subsumed under one basic principle, which we refer to as 'internal universalism'. Although not used in the field, we nevertheless have chosen this term because it conceptualizes the relevant action of workplace industrial relations actors concisely. The adjective 'internal' indicates the spatial limitations of this universalistic rule.

Table 11: "Is there a covert rejection between German and foreign colleagues, which is not openly talked about?"
(multiple answers, percentages)

Company	A		B		C	
	Germans	Migrants	Germans	Migrants	Germans	Migrants
No, by no means	22	29	32	12	23	21
Yes, among few colleagues of German origin	27	19	28	30	33	43
Yes, among many colleagues of German origin	3	12	1	16	9	8
Yes, among few colleagues of foreign origin	25	24	11	18	32	25
Yes, among many colleagues of foreign origin	8	3	4	11	7	0
Don't know	41	35	37	44	23	26

Source: weighted survey.

Moreover, internal universalism bears a further restriction, which follows from the universalistic rule application itself. The application of equal rules to employees with different backgrounds causes unequal effects if the rules are not abstract enough to cover cultural differences. Christmas holidays for all employees, regardless of their belief or non-belief, are an example of this problem. If one takes into consideration that fast-breaking at the end of Ramadan is a regular working day in the companies and Muslims have to apply for individual leave in order to be able to celebrate their holiday, the inequality implied in internal universalism becomes evident. Equal treatment for diverse employees does not overcome inequality as long as the allegedly universal rules had been determined by mainly one cultural group. It would be a misinterpretation though to understand internal universalism as a method which intentionally targets the stabilizing of a hidden practice of discrimination. Personnel managers are convinced that following universalism is the best method to guarantee a productive atmosphere. Economic reasons are not the only but the primarily mentioned motives. Works councilors, by contrast, rather emphasize ethical reasons for the application of universalistic rules. We have also found minor differences between the companies.

The chairman of the works council from Company A insists on a rigid form of equal rule application. In his view, paying perceptible attention to national or ethnic backgrounds within the labor force could entail the risk of fostering group differences which otherwise would successively diminish. Company C applies the principle of universalism as well as both other companies, but there are also tentative references to the diversity concept. For example, the personnel manager's labor and social report at the staff meetings regularly emphasizes the internationality of the labor force in a positive way.

> (I) say, we have a wide range, we have more than 20 nations here. The largest groups are the Turks and the Portuguese. But beyond this, half the world is represented. (…) we are international actually. What counts: we are all (members of Company C). Problems exist everywhere, in all nations, and that's in Germany just the same. And (I'm saying): Let's discuss problems frankly with each other. And: There is no acceptance of xenophobia or anything else. (Personnel manager, Company C)

The personnel manager regrets that the works council has no special 'foreign workers committee' ('*Ausländerausschuss*') anymore, which formerly had worked according to the motto: "They (the 'foreigners') have other problems and other difficulties" (personnel manager, Company C). Although the company's works council abstains from having a special committee for 'foreigners', some works councilors are particularly engaged in supporting migrant workers (e.g. concerning the right of residence, etc.) Perhaps one could call the version of universalism applied in Company A as 'strict' and that of Company C as 'moderate'.

'Internal universalism' and 'pragmatic cooperation' are mutually dependent: Whereas 'internal universalism' is the algorithm for 'pragmatic cooperation' on the one hand, the described tendency to view their co-workers primarily as colleagues facilitates the efforts of collective actors to enforce universalism on the other hand. There is a difference between the application of the rule and the practices of interaction. Whereas the strict version of internal universalism, as we have found it in Company A, has certain features in common with assimilation and fits the 'individual-based pragmatic cooperation', the moderate version with its overtone of diversity-management goes together with the 'group-based pragmatic cooperation'. This difference is reflected in the following example: Whereas the works council of Company A refuses to give information to the employees in other languages than German, it is common in Company C to provide multilingual flyers.

Remarkably, these differences are also backed by the respective trade unions: Works council A, as its chairman pointed out, usually does not receive multilingual information material from the IG Metall (and if this was the case, the flyers would not get distributed in Company A), whereas the multilingual flyers of works council C are predominantly provided by the IG BCE. Apparently the forms of 'internal universalism' vary also within the policies of trade unions.

However, besides certain variations between companies and works councils, more important is the high degree of congruence regarding the incidence of 'internal universalism' by the actors in all three cases. Besides collegiality, which emerges in the course of the workers' daily interaction, external circumstances constitute a second precondition for 'internal universalism'. The external impacts are by and large the same for all three cases. Wages and working conditions are basically set by a relatively effective institutional framework of collective agreements and labor law. This framework itself is oriented towards universalistic

rules and the fact that the investigated companies are embedded within such a framework supports (and partly enforces) the prevention of discrimination at the workplace.

Moreover, this institutional framework also shapes the interest articulation by employees. The Works Constitution Act gives employees the right to elect works councils which are endowed with noteworthy co-determination rights. This opportunity structure favors representative collective action of the labor force. An individual employee who wants to influence the behavior of a line manager or the organization as a whole has at best a chance to be successful if he or she articulates his or her concern through the works council. Kotthoff (1994) described a specific type of works council (among others), which he called 'effectively representing' ('*vertretungswirksam*'), as having a considerable impact on internal social integration.

> It is the social integrator of the labor collective, too. It is the representative of the collective. It is the embodiment of 'collective consciousness'. It keeps the collective together, gives it self-certitude and meaning, i.e. identity. (Kotthoff, 1994: 271, translated by the authors)

To a large extent, the works councils in all three case companies can be subsumed under this 'effectively representing' type. Works councils of this type gain influence not only on management decisions but on the labor force as well. An expression of this can be seen in the role the works councils play as a mediator in conflicts between employees, which is particularly important for migrant workers (see Table 12). Works councilors often follow a pattern of de-ethnization as a means of mediation (e.g. by arguing that conflicts at work '"have nothing do with one's origin", and that "in any case someone's origin is a private matter and has nothing to do with the workplace"). In compliance with 'internal universalism', this line of argumentation treats the contestants as if they were only employees, and not as individuals who belong to a group of a particular origin, and utilizes therefore the boundary between internal and external social space again. Remarkably, this way of conflict resolution is quite successful and migrant workers in all case companies judge their experiences with it as supportive rather than as cultural dominance of the majority. De-ethnization represents a special application of 'internal universalism'.

However, 'internal universalism' is neither a strategy works councilors deliberately choose, nor can it be derived from taken-for-granted values from an external 'lifeworld'. Anyhow, employees' various origins diminish the relevance of a unitary 'lifeworld' as a source of common values. Besides this, cultural or racist resentments play a not insignificant role in Germany society (Thalhammer et al., 2001), thus universalistic values are not a matter of course. Rather than being an expression of taken-for-granted values, 'internal universalism' emerges from a combination of societal differentiation and the German model of industrial relations.

Although societal differentiation, and with it the existence of the world of work as a particular sphere within society, enforces a distinction between the individual and the employee (or between person and 'labor power'), the specific model of industrial relations determines the way in which interests are being constituted and articulated within the world of work. Because the German model of industrial relations does not differentiate in principle between persons of different origin, the 'employee model' of interest constitution predominates at workplaces: Employees articulate their interests as employees rather than as members of different ethnic or cultural communities.

Table 12: "Is the works council important for mediating between colleagues in case of conflict?" (manual workers, percentages and mean)

Company	A		B		C	
	Germans	Migrants	Germans	Migrants	Germans	Migrants
Very important (1)	11.8	31.8	3.4	28.0	16.8	25.6
Rather important (2)	24.9	29.6	19.7	33.2	38.1	32.7
Neither … nor (3)	28.7	27.3	38.8	19.8	20.5	28.8
Rather unimportant (4)	32.0	9.3	24.7	19.0	18.9	10.8
Completely unimportant (5)	2.7	2.0	13.5	0.0	5.7	2.0
Mean	***2.89*	***2.20*	****3.25*	****2.30*	**2.59*	**2.31*

Displayed are significant differences concerning descent (** < 0.1; ** < 0.05; *** < 0.01)*.
Source: weighted survey.

From a perspective of social recognition and group identities the 'employee model of interest representation' is not self-evident, especially because resentments and particularistic orientations are indeed a societal problem. An ethnicity-oriented interest representation is therefore a latent possible alternative. Without the institutional framework – works councils-and trade unions with universalistic orientation – the constitution of collective interests along descent would have a head start over the employee model because pre-existing identities could serve as resources for constituting interest groups.

Although from an international perspective the German model of industrial relations is still comparably stable, there is a constant decline in the coverage rate of labor agreements: in 2010 only 34 per cent of companies and 56 per cent of employees in western Germany and 17 per cent of companies and 38 per cent of employees in eastern Germany were still covered by sectoral agreements (IAB-Betriebspanel, 2010).

A further erosion of the institutional framework would weaken the established mechanisms of interest constitution, and the hitherto effective modus of internal social integration could be led into crisis. Because it would be rational for individuals to prefer strategies which seem to be realizable and successful, alternative modes of interest articulation could gain further importance, especially in companies with diversity management concepts. However, up to now the described model is stable all in all.

6. Conclusions

In our paper we have investigated German industrial workplaces and tackled the question of how employees with a German and a migration background are positioned within companies' social structures, how heterogeneous groups get along with each other, and what role German co-determination plays in the social integration of these groups.

In our examined company cases we have found structural inequality between employees of different origin, a widespread form of collegiality which we call ‘pragmatic cooperation’, and ‘universalistic’ rules limited to the sphere of work, or ‘internal universalism’.

The German model of industrial relations fosters workplace social integration. Works councils are important internal proponents of universalistic rule-application. However, universalistic interest representation and the constitution of a non-particularistic workforce entail both advantages and disadvantages for integration and equal treatment. On the one hand, ‘internal universalism’ and ‘pragmatic cooperation’ support a perspective in which conflicts and difficulties at work are interpreted in a context of social status or class. On the other hand, this model seems to be quite blind to real existing structural ethnic inequality.

Would a change to a more particularistic model of interest representation improve the situation of migrants and diminish social inequality?

This is uncertain. A particularistic approach could bear the advantage that if more attention is paid to ethnic or national backgrounds, the probability of exposing and thus remedying structural ethnic inequality could be raised. However, there is also a risk that the particularistic approach will lead to an increase of conflicts based on ethnicity, nationality, or migration background. Because social and political power play a crucial role in conflicts between groups, it could be easier for a majority group than for minorities to assert its interests. A backlash against equal treatment and minorities’ interests could thus be an unintended result of the particularistic approach. Moreover, if the workforce becomes divided, the power of trade unions and works councils to assert the interests of the entire labor force would probably decline further.

However, insisting on a ‘strict’ universalistic approach is not only blind to ethnic inequalities but not without risk for generating conflicts either. The risk lies in a sudden change of perspective, which could lead to the ‘discovery’ of persisting pronounced ethnic inequality between employees with a German background and those of a migrant background. Whereas from the perspective of ‘internal universalism’ unequal positions are acceptable if differences are a consequence of qualification and performance, and as long as all employees are internally treated equal independent of their origin, from the perspective of a comparison of ethnic groups such inequalities seem completely intolerable. A change in the pattern of interpretation between both perspectives could therefore have similar effects like the change from a ‘singularizing interpretation’ to a ‘symptomatizing interpretation’ we observed within the companies. Ethnic conflicts would probably be the consequence in such a case as well.

We assume that for Germany a ‘moderate’ version of ‘internal universalism’, which does not ignore employees’ real existing special needs that possibly arise from cultural differences or the migration background, enriched by supportive measures for all employees with low levels of training and a relatively low internal status within the company social structure, independent of their backgrounds, could be more stable and sustainable than a diversity-supporting policy.

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