The conference that this volume of Impact of Empire is based upon, was dedicated to “Integration at Rome and in the Roman World”. Looking at the call for papers for that conference, we read the following: “We are therefore explicitly looking for papers that deal with the juridical, social and political aspects of this process of inclusion… on the following themes: integration and juridical statutes, Roman citizenship and local citizenship, cities and tribes; integration and political history, conception of Imperium Romanum, provinciae, ciuitates and imperial power; integration and social history, Roman concept of ciuitas, local elites and ordines; integration and ‘Romanness’, frameworks of social life, cultural and cultural practices.”

I have quoted this at some length, because this passage shows how much integration is taken for granted. The word “integration” is repeated in the context of many different fields – actually covering all of society except the economy which is not singled out, but which might be considered to fall under the heading of “social life” and “cultural practices”. It also summarizes all of this as a “process of inclusion”. The integrative power of the empire is the point of departure. As the French title of the conference, « Les voies de l’intégration à Rome et dans le monde Romain », made clear, contributors were supposed to study the ways in which integration was arrived at, its modalities. Maybe one was also to look at persisting local diversity and at those missing out because they could not or would not be integrated, but it seems fairly obvious that participants were to consider above all the success story of the Roman empire as a progressively more integrated whole – until it starts disintegrating again.

---

1 J. Hoffmann-Salz, Die wirtschaftlichen Auswirkungen der römischen Eroberung. Vergleichende Untersuchungen der Provinzen Hispania Tarraconensis, Africa Proconsularis und Syria (Stuttgart 2011) is an exemplary study of integration in the economic field – with conclusions which can readily be compared with my argument below (see esp. 441–498).

2 About those left out of the integration process, eloquently: R. Hingley, Globalizing Roman culture. Unity, diversity and empire (Abingdon 2005), 116. Also, apparent integration
“Success story” is a way of putting it that would probably be disputed: integration and inclusion could be used in a neutral sense. Or could they? Let us look at a recent example of a study of integration. In the volume entitled *Comment les Gaules devinrent romaines*, there are contributions on new administrative structures, urbanisation, innovative burial practices, changing patterns of land use, especially the establishment of a villa economy, and the introduction of “viticulture, oléiculture et fructiculture”. The book is a valuable collection of studies, well-documented and nuanced in its interpretations. Its authors have taken on board the debate on Romanization; it is obvious they have read Greg Woolf: they take care to show that the Gauls were not as barbaric as previous generations thought they were, and that although the Romans may have romanized Gaul, the Gauls had their input into the process. But even if this is never stated explicitly, it is to be understood that much of what the Romans bring (and which gets accepted by the locals and then takes on its own dynamics and so on) is an improvement upon the previous situation – certainly the vines, olive trees and a range of fruit-bearing shrubs and trees seem to get the attention attributed to them because they are essential for France, at least gastronomically, to come into existence. So it must be all for the best. The importance of a Roman past for the nation state, or, in a more recent ideological turn, the Roman empire as a precedent for, if not forerunner of, a united Europe, seems to imply that being conquered by Rome is “a good thing”. Rome as the purveyor of literacy, advanced building techniques and agricultural practices, an infrastructure that in part is still functioning, of Christianity and so on: it could hardly be bad. So when we speak can be used as what has been called “transculturation”: the mimicry of the dominant culture in order to mock or subvert it.

5. Of course, there are several who argue for the opposite view: the bad Roman imperialists – because imperialists and empires are bad altogether. Such “empire bashing” is a fruitless affair, burdened with anachronistic notions. For a recent example, see T.H. Parsons, *The Rule of Empires. Those who built them, those who endured them, and why they always fall* (Oxford 2010). This is sympathetic in its attack on neo-cons and their imperialist nostalgia – but looking for the villain of the piece, I would tend to end up with the nation state. Parsons sees empires as extractive and exploitative. From the top down, these institutions seem rational and relatively benign, but in reality it took intimidation, naked force, and institutional slavery to produce all the grand monuments and cultural achievements of the ancient world (23). It is intriguing to see how this is undercut by an interesting analysis of the cultural make-up of the empire. The Romans are said to have been more open to easing the line between citizen and subject than their successors in