

International Conference and Summer School of the "BMBF-Research Network for Latin America"

"Mobilizing Ethnicity - Competing identity politics in the Americas: Past and Present"

**Conference: July 2nd to July 3rd 2012 in Bielefeld
Summer School: June 27th to July 6th 2012 in Bielefeld**

Within the context of the Quincentenary of the European expansion to the Americas in 1492, numerous indigenous groups throughout the continent mobilized to denounce the (post-) colonial legacy of present societies and to express their political, economic and cultural needs. The year 1992 can thus be related to a paradigmatic transition in ethnic identity politics. Traditionally restricted to local or national contexts, ethnic identity politics in the 1990s became much more globally connected, expanding into an increasing range of fields of social practice such as economy, law, academia, ecology and medicine. While social movements from a variety of ethnic backgrounds pushed for institutional change by appealing to the international attention markets, they were joined by a growing diversity of social actors in the re-negotiations of ethnicity and cultural difference in the public space.

Both the Summer School and the International Conference address this prominent role of ethnic identity politics in the ongoing struggle for defining the principles and boundaries of social inclusion and political participation in the Americas with regard to the historical processes and present situations. The aim is to establish a balance of two decades of intensive and conflictive identity politics in the Americas and to identify new tendencies of the strategic use of ethnicity in politics, economics and culture.

The Bielefeld Summer School of the "BMBF- Research Network for Latin America" is based on three pillars:

First, we offer 8 workshops for graduate students and Phd candidates on specialized topics about mobilizing ethnicity. Each student of the summer school can choose two workshops during the course of the program. The workshops introduce the recent discussions and give methodological orientations in the research of ethnic dynamics in the Americas.

Second, we offer for all students of the summer school a media-practical unit. Here the students learn the technical and practical basics to produce a radio documentary. The radio-feature will be produced during the summer school.

Third, during the summer school, a conference on "Mobilizing Ethnicity" will take place. This conference will unite out-standing scholars to debate the ethnic dynamics in political, cultural and economic fields in the Americas.

Panels (Conference):

1. 1992-2012: Balancing Two Decades of Indigenous Movements

Since the Quincentenary of European conquest and cultural encounter in the Americas in 1992, indigenous organizations throughout the two continents have expressed claims for cultural recognition, socio-economic self-definition and political participation within, as well as outside, the context of their own national governments and the world society. The politicization of ethnic identities and the ethnicization of political agendas have led, during the last twenty years, to a profound crisis of the legitimacy of the traditional Latin American nation-states, while new concepts of community and social organization (*buen vivir* etc.) based on presumed indigenous concepts have emerged. The panel will discuss the achievements and conflicts that ethnic mobilization has generated from the early 1990s to the present.

2. Debating the Future of Ethno-development

In reaction to the rising of a powerful indigenous protest movement, a whole series of development programs were implemented covering such diverse fields as intercultural bilingual education, rural development, ethnic entrepreneurship, social capital and ethno- and biodiversity.

Generally it is argued that ethno-development contributes to processes of democratization and recognition by empowering discriminated groups. This vision is put into question by two very different points of views. On the one hand, parts of the established elite have argued that these projects foment social movements that put into question the established order of the nation-states. On the other hand, leftist critics saw strategies in these projects to assimilate ethnic groups and peoples in a neo-indigenous way and to co-opt organic intellectuals of the ethnic movements. Thereby, the concept of development itself was harshly criticized as Eurocentric and, recently substituted by new concepts like “*buen vivir*.” The panel will discuss these tendencies and will ask for new strategies and projects of ethno-development in the 21st century.

3. Ethnicity in Postmodern Mediaspaces

Mediating ethnicity today means to position oneself between media production as a form of cultural resistance and processes of hybridization. The digital revolution has profoundly changed the conditions of access to media for subaltern population groups – new cultural circuits have evolved fostering world wide connectivity and attention to the so-called ethnic minorities. Contrastingly, the commercial exploitation of ethnicity has proven to be a viable option for the cultural industries of post-Fordism. The panel focuses these two phenomena in contemporary mediascapes which have been crucial to the currently shifting notions of ethnicity and ethnic identity politics and also addresses the interrelations between both tendencies.

4. Ethnicity and Political Communication in Processes of State Formation in 19th Century Latin America

Since the late 18th century the nation state is, not only in the Americas, one of the most powerful constructs that structures society. Political participation was constantly negotiated between different social (collective) groups like *comunidades indígenas*, landowners or representatives of the state. These demands and the struggle for political representation were mostly based upon and legitimated by a supposed collective identity. Therefore the panel aims at analyzing different processes of collectivization, based on an imagined collective identity – referring to regional, national, ethnical criteria – by using approaches from political and cultural history.

5. **Inter-ethnic Perceptions of Nature Conservation Issues**

Analyzing and understanding the perceptions of nature conservation issues by different segments of Latin American societies is crucial for the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). How do indigenous people, nature reserve managers, agriculture professionals, NGOs, Christians and other denominations, scientists, politicians and other stakeholders view the issues associated e.g. with the establishment of biosphere reserves and other cutting-edge conservation problems like biological invasions? The panel provides a platform for in-depth discussions on recent tendencies of the subject.

6. **Global Ethnicities**

While ethnicity is a concept deeply rooted in localized identities, the last decades of the 20th century have witnessed the emergence of transnational, global ethnic organizations and forums. Supranational institutions like the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent or the UNESCO Slave Route-Project are pivotal spaces where global identities of indigenous peoples or members of the African Diaspora are being discussed. This panel invites contributions that broaden upon these global processes of ethnic mobilization and identity politics.

7. **Gender and Ethnicity in the Indigenous Movement**

When the question of gender occurs in the context of indigenism, it is usually interpreted as a complementary aspect. It is intended to attribute any deviation from this assumed identity to the conditions of domination characteristic to colonialism, which came to Latin America on board of European ships in the sixteenth century.

But there are many historical sources that reveal the sexist and patriarchic character of various indigenous peoples. Therefore, we propose to discuss the following questions in the panel: What does it mean to be a woman and to be indigenous in today's society? How is the indigenous performance lived from the female perspective? Are the demands of indigenous women included in the agendas of their movements? Are there indigenous movements for women or are the movements limited to merely "include women"?

8. **Commodifying Ethnicity: The Strategic Use of Culture in Post-Fordist Economies**

In post-fordist economies we can observe an ever-growing tendency to make use of cultural identities for economic ends. World Music, aboriginal handcraft and artwork, ethnic food, multicultural literature, indigenous tourism and the experience of authenticity are no longer niche-products in the market but dynamic segments of a growing alterity and diversity industry. This panel explores the strategic use of ethnicity in the Americas from the production and distribution to the new ethnicized consumer cultures.

Workshops (Summer School):

1. “Exigimos la devolución de nuestra imagen!” Indigenous Self Representation in Audiovisual Media (Sebastian Thies)

The aim of this workshop is to give an introduction to indigenous media production, which has seen a considerable increase since the 1980s when programs such as the “transferencia de medios” by the Instituto Nacional Indigenista in Mexico or the Bolivian CEFREC started to train indigenous people in the use of film and video. We will have a look into how these forms of self-representation evolved from those early times when there was a notable influence by visual anthropologists to the growing autonomy of media production with the creation of transnational filmmakers’ networks such as the CLACPI, a specialized festival circuit and ultimately internet television.

2. Indigenous Languages in Mexico and Central America (Stavros Skopeteas)

The aim of this workshop is to offer an introduction to the languages of Central America, from Uto-Aztecan and Mayan languages in Mexico, to the Chibchan and Choco languages in Panama. First, we will introduce the languages and the language families and we will discuss the language situation in the present (language communities, influence of the transformation processes in Latin America to the language use, language endangerment). Second, we offer an outline of the linguistic properties of these languages: grammatical categories that are unusual in the perspective of native speakers of Indo-European languages, relation between linguistic categories and properties of the conceptualization. As an illustration, we will present and analyze recorded texts in indigenous languages. This workshop is addressed to anyone interested in the study of Latin American languages and cultures (it does not require any technical or linguistic skills).

3. Ethnic Literatures in the Americas (Luz Angélica Kirschner/Wilfried Raussert)

From a comparative perspective, this workshop on ethnic literature will engage with literary works by African American, Asian American, and Latin@ writers in an attempt to grasp the history, complexity, and richness of literatures that inevitably exceed, and often precede, the established boundaries of literary canons and nation-states. We will focus on concepts of ethnicity and post-ethnicity in the discussion of selected literary texts. In addition, with reference to the US in particular, we will look at literary texts claiming their right to be acknowledged as integral to the literary tradition of “the” nation of immigrants par excellence, which too often has thwarted the immigrants’ desires to belong and enjoy the American Dream of perpetual improvement.

4. Migration: Theoretical Questioning, Research Design and Case Analysis (Cornelia Giebeler)

This workshop will offer three phases of discussion to encourage thorough analysis of the topic. First, we will dive into the discussion process on migration theory within the framework of social justice and social differentiation. We will then continue to explore, the impact that class, ethnicity, gender and the body plays on migration theory. Next, with a brief brainstorming activity we will develop a research design for investigation and will work with a transcription of a biographical interview. Everybody is invited to bring her/his research material (in Spanish or German) to participate in the social science methodology “Forschungswerkstatt”. Finally, in the third phase of the workshop you are invited to observe “case studies” in migration contexts of Latin Americans by conducting interviews or filming social situations. At the end of the workshop, everyone should be prepared to present their findings.

5. **Historical Justice: Politics of Memory and History in Latin America (Jochen Kemner)**

Latin American societies have sought more or less successfully to aim for reconciliation after the massive human rights violations during the years of military dictatorship and the escalation of state sponsored, paramilitary and guerilla violence in the late 20th century. As in other places, truth commissions have been an important political instrument in this process. Following these developments, new attempts to address historical, structural injustices of colonialism and slavery have emerged. But is it possible to judge crimes, that happened centuries ago the same way as present day rights violations, even as the traumatic consequences of racism, ethnocide or land robbery are still felt today? Who are the victims and who are the offenders in these cases? How do groups legitimize claims to reparations, when they have no direct relation to the original crime? These are questions, that are to be addressed in the workshop. We will look into the practical work of recent truth commissions, evaluate the debates regarding historical justice and discuss politics of memory in contemporary Latin America.

6. **Urban Ethnic Landscapes: Between Heritage and Hybridization (Olaf Kaltmeier)**

Urban spaces are highly creative sites in the social and cultural production of ethnic identities. On the one hand, we can state dynamic processes of cultural hybridization due to immigration, cultural diversity, cosmopolitan imageries and liquid life-styles. On the other hand, we can observe a growing importance of cultural heritage and politics of authenticity, that aim to fix identities and cultural disposition vis-à-vis the fear of a homogenizing cultural globalization. Both dynamics go hand in hand with a new strategic use of ethnicity in urban cultural politics that finds its expression in transnational heritage programs, urban tourism, life-style-marketing, and gentrification. The workshop will begin with an introduction on the relevant academic literature on urban cultural politics. Next, this workshop will explore the multi-faceted and conflictive dynamics between heritage and hybridization by analyzing paradigmatic examples of urban ethnic landscapes in the Americas.

7. **Ethnicity and Democracy. Challenging the Boundaries of the Political in Latin America (Christian Büschges)**

Since the last decade of the twentieth century ethnic mobilization has provoked major changes in the social, political and cultural outline of most Latin American nation-states. Constitutional reforms, new modes of political representation and participation and concrete measures to protect the cultural diversity of society have been enforced. At the same time, new concepts of society, politics and legal practice legitimated by reference to a peculiar indigenous tradition have provoked fierce disputes and conflicts which, in some cases, threaten to divide society and even, as in Bolivia, menace to lead to complete disintegration. The workshop focuses on these recent trends of ethnicization of the political sphere and addresses the major achievements and obstacles they have produced during the last two decades.

8. **Ethnicity, Identity and Development (Eric Bejarano Vargas)**

Through a participatory approach - basically developing a role play activity and possibly supplementing with a SWOT analysis or working on case studies - an exchange of different views and opinions of the participants around development and development co-operation shall be encouraged. The practical exercise will serve as a means of introduction into the topic and at the same time as an exchange scenario to enrich the debate around ethnicity, identities and development.

The workshop is directed to everybody interested in development, especially in Latin America. The workshop language will be Spanish and participation will be limited to 15 people.

For the Conference please send proposals with not more than 200 words no later than **January 15th 2012** to summerschool-ethnicity@uni-bielefeld.de indicating the panel you like to speak in.

Registration

To attend the Summer School and the Conference, or just the Conference exclusively, please fill out the (following) registration forms:

www.uni-bielefeld.de/cias/summerschool/anmeldung.html

or

http://www.kompetenzla.uni-koeln.de/bielefeld2012_en.html

Summer School (including Conference):

Registration until **May 1st 2012**.

Conference:

Registration until **June 3rd 2012**.

Contact

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