

Call for Papers

Inaugural Conference of the Interdisciplinary Research Group

“*E Pluribus Unum?* — Ethnic Identities in Processes of Transnational Integration in the Americas”

October 8 - 11, 2008

ZiF (Center for Interdisciplinary Research), Bielefeld University, Germany

The age of globalization has spawned a renewed focus on political and cultural negotiations in what one might call with Bourdieu the *field of identity politics*. This development manifests itself throughout the American hemisphere: new indigenous movements have contested post-colonial forms of political representation in Ecuador and Bolivia; the debates on ecological consequences of industrialization and on intellectual property rights have put indigenous groups from the Amazonian region on international agendas; large numbers of people have been mobilized for and against immigration reform in the U.S.; and so-called “ethnic minorities” may decide the current electoral process in the United States. In current academic discussions, concepts like multiculturalism, new ethnicities, creolization, hybridity, *mestizaje*, diasporas, and “post-ethnicity” articulate positionings vis à vis these developments, profoundly changing our understanding of “ethnicity.”

This renewed focus on ethnic identity demonstrates the need for a comprehensive and interdisciplinary model of analysis that incorporates the complexity of identity constructions in the context of transnational integration. The Inter-American Research Group at the Bielefeld Center for Interdisciplinary Research aims to contribute to an understanding of key factors in the field of identity politics, of the changing semantics of ethnicity, as well as of the cultural practices of identity construction. How are identity-shaping strategies and discourses translated into everyday practices and how do social elites, political institutions, businesses, the media, and agents of civil society (public intellectuals, filmmakers, writers, artists, educators etc.) mediate between local, national, and transnational horizons of interaction?

In order to elucidate – in the context of inter-American transnationalism – the role of ethnicity in the field of identity politics, the inaugural conference will focus on the following three areas:

Conceptualizing the Field of Identity Politics

- Constellations of social and cultural agents in ethnic negotiations and conflicts
- Articulations of identity discourses; the positioning of self and not-self
- Processes of translation between discourses and cultural practices
- Narrations and performances of ethnic identities

Transnationalism and Ethnic Identity

- Migration, ethnic diasporas, and translocal communities
- Emergence of new ethnicities
- De- and re-territorializations and the horizons of interaction of ethnic agents
- Ethnic representations in transnational media

Ethnicity in/and Conflict

- The use and misuse of ethnicity as a resource (or: the expediency of ethnicity)
- Ethnic communities, neo-tribalization, and inter-ethnic competition
- Postcolonial backgrounds of inter-ethnic conflicts
- Intersections of ethnic, class, gender, religious, regional, and/or national identities

One-page proposals for 30-minute papers (in English or in Spanish) should be e-mailed by **April 30, 2008** to: Trixi.valentin@uni-bielefeld.de.

Conference participants may apply for partial funding of accommodation costs and travel expenses.

Organizers: Prof. Dr. Josef Raab (American Studies, University of Duisburg-Essen), JunProf. Dr. Sebastian Thies (Latin American Studies and Media Studies; Bielefeld University), Dr. Olaf Kaltmeier (Sociology, Bielefeld University)