

INTRODUCTION:
INTERDEPENDENCIES OF SOCIAL CATEGORISATIONS IN PAST
AND PRESENT SOCIETIES OF LATIN AMERICA AND BEYOND

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The Research Network for Latin America *Ethnicity, Citizenship, Belonging* is investigating symbolic boundary making and notions of belonging to foster a better understanding of exclusions and inequalities in Latin America. It started from the assumption that this area under discussion can best be understood by looking at the meanings actors attach to quotidian concepts of collectivity, participation, and belonging to institutions, places or groups. In their studies, the networks' researchers try to look at the three topics ethnicity, citizenship and belonging in an integrated way, asking for connections and exchanges among them (cf. Albiez, *et al.*, 2011). They include historic as much as today's manifestations of symbolic boundaries and perceptions of (dis-)orderliness in Latin America, focusing on daily interactions and negotiations, yet taking them into account in a complex interrelation with social structures. The networks second international symposium in Cologne (Germany) in September 2011 was dedicated to "Interdependencies of Social Categorisations" in Latin America and other regions of the world. The emphasis on social categorisations stresses the symposiums overall aim to understand and reconstruct perceptions of identifications and differentiations: processes of symbolic groupings, their impacts on in- and exclusions, and their concomitant consequences regarding social inequalities.

Ethnicity is one, probably the most salient, way of routine labelling by which belonging is organised (not only) in Latin America. It functions as one of the key topics of the network, and accordingly, the contributions to this volume are concerned with, *inter alia*, ethnicity. Nevertheless, other categorisations are no less important in their proliferation and in their practical consequences: an individual's economic position, distinctions based on gender or age, religious beliefs or practices, or an urban or rural origin can be mentioned among many other aspects of belonging that can be, and are in various manners, used by actors to align themselves or others with certain groups. In 'real life' however, there are no clear-cut categories that could be

strictly separated from each other. This can be easily illustrated by the example of ethnicity. Today in Argentina, “*negro*” is a derogatory term. It might be employed in an explicitly racist way meaning indigenous or African ancestry. During the 20th century though, it was not used primarily against Afro-Argentines; rather it is a generic term for groups of lower social status. This might include—and did indeed primarily in the past—members of the working class and was in this usage not openly related to their phenotype, yet denying them to be *culturally* ‘pure’ white. Looking seemingly ‘non-white’ has been read by actors throughout the 20th century “as an indication of miscegenation and therefore, *by default*, of a lower social standing” (Adamovsky, this volume, 93). This is hence implying a racialised group identity and denoting a presumed ethnically mixed ancestry. The proletarian sectors of society were being called “*negros*” to stress their association with ‘barbarity’, hence exacerbating the symbolic distance between socio-economic groups. In his article on the “non-diasporic ‘negro’ identity in Argentina” in this volume, Adamovsky argues, that movements that confronted the myth of the ‘white’ Argentina existed—implicitly—throughout the 20th century among the lower classes. This can only be understood looking at the long history of the interacting quotidian perceptions of classist and racist groupings.¹

Equally complex re-configurations of “ethnic” classifications emerge today in other regions of the world. In China, the categorisations of 56 different *minzu* (“ethnic groups”), decreed by the central state during the 1950s, “became not just an ethnic category but a comprehensive social categorisation” (Alpermann, this volume, 246). Today, official politics offer the—to some extent privileging—formal status of “ethnic minorities”, yet this leads to an ethnisation of social inequalities as the same official discourses “tend to blame minorities themselves for their alleged ‘backwardness’ and poverty” (*op. cit.*). Socio-economic and political status categories, tied since the same period to the distinction between rural and urban dwellers, are increasingly colliding with the highly dynamic society of contemporary China: as migrants from rural areas come into the mega cities, the compulsory registration of residence is no longer possible for them, hence they are excluded from basic rights they once held—which can be called “socialist citizenship”

¹ This partial overlapping of race and class was equally widespread in 19th century Europe; cf. Gabbert, 2007.

(*op. cit.*, 242). Institutionalised social categorisations do in this sense interact in a way that can not be conceptualised in an additive perspective. We refer to this complex interweaving of social categorisations as *interdependency*.²

DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN EMIC AND ETIC CONCEPTS

While hardly questioned whether interdependencies do actually matter, it is still controversial how to investigate and represent these processes. One problem often addressed is, how many categorisations “intersectional-type” studies (Dhamoon, 2011, 232) could—or should—address. If we act on the assumption that an interdependency framework has to be anti-hierarchical, no single dimension, be it for instance gender, can on its own be sufficient to adequately describe power relations in a society as a whole. The same holds true for race or class. Today, after the demise of the Marxist distinction between one principal and several non-principal contradictions, very few would probably claim to have found the one and only dominant principle of inequality. That’s why in these debates the question, which category should take priority over the others, has long ceased to be central. The question rather is how the various dimensions work together and how they are related to each other. However, some dimensions are almost always mentioned. Where does the dominance of race/class/gender come from? Subsequently, if we ask which categorisations of difference are important and why, we implicitly decide which are less important, and reinsert a hierarchical thinking. Can we thus, at least theoretically, create a complete list of all categorisations and/or categories? Will this list contain the same at all times and in every region of the world?

We suggest distinguishing between different theoretical concepts implied in the questions raised: the emic and etic use of categories, or, as Brubaker and Cooper propose calling them, “categories of practice” and “categories of analysis” (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000, 4). In everyday practices of differentiation, from an *emic perspective* of the actors, the attributes of identity and difference used derive from the situations and the actors involved. The interdependencies analysed then include “how different categories interact in

² We use “interdependency” as a generic term including other approaches concerned with conceptual interrelations.

shaping subjective experiences, often experiences of discrimination, how they determine access to resources and options and how they are taken up in constructions of identity” (Knapp, 2005, 259). This can possibly mean a long list including not only gender or age, class or occupation, ethnicity, origin, language, religion, or sexual orientation, but many more or just a few of these labels, actors attach to themselves or other. This list will differ according to time and place, and thus to enumerate all possible categorisations would be futile (Klinger, 2008, 40). We will call them, for a more precise delimitation against the following, “social categorisations”. The term *etic concept*, on the other hand, is reserved for categories of analysis introduced and used when thinking about the social. They are explanatory tools. They do not aim at describing what actors think or use, but at what makes them act the way they act. This indicates social relations, organised in an impersonal way.³ While from a perspective taking into account the social practices, mutually interdependent categorisations are not only likely, but also necessary; the theoretically assumed etic concepts are made up basically different. Such abstractions are ‘invented’ by science as reflection on the world. They are, in our opinion, to be understood most appropriately not as realities, but as heuristic “signposts for sets of social relations” (Anthias, this volume, 30), put up by the researchers in order to sort out relationships, to organise them temporarily and to discuss them with colleagues by means of etic designations. These scholars certainly do not position themselves outside the world, as all science is done by humans who are, themselves, positioned subjects, and are no ‘neutral’ observers. Yet they try to organise the intricate and confusing reality into isolated strands. They necessarily make simplifications and are, usually, aware of this. Those, who want to work theoretically, know that theory does not equal empiricism; “the map is not the territory” (Korzybski, 1958, 58).

The evident misunderstanding that often occurs while talking about ‘interlocking’ structures or ‘intersecting’ differences stems from the fact that for both conceptual logics, etic and emic, at times the same terms are employed. Race can be both an actor’s evaluation of human phenotype and the scientific explanation of why this matters to people; gender can equally

³ These theoretical abstractions can be called “world historical systems of domination” (Klinger, 2003, 26, quoting Donna Haraway); “systems of domination” (Dhamoon, 2011, 233); “ontological realms” (Anthias, 2001, 377), among other terms.

describe the perception of sexual differences as much as the structure behind this categorisation. Some authors thus use different words to distinguish between emic and etic meanings of terms, and devote a few lines to a definition of their understanding of the analytical concepts used.⁴ Unfortunately, most of the time the same terms are used for the two very different concepts. The problem is not the use of supposedly ‘wrong’ terms, but the ambiguity concerning their usage with respect to different applications. Thus, the theoretical assumption that interdependencies exist does not start from the same basic assumptions in relation to each of the two argumentations.

An empirical study is encouraged to portray a lived and experienced situation of exclusion or discrimination as completely as possible. Its analytical examination will be multi-dimensional and will try to take into account all aspects relevant to the participants. No person is only rich or poor, man or woman, old or young, but will always be perceived by other actors in a multi-dimensional way. And, if we understand this as a process, the positioning of the parties involved is not fixed or static, but results from the interaction. Which of these characteristics are important in the actual interactions depend on the context and the situation and is, thus, an empirical question. This is certainly an implication of intersectional-type approaches.

An abstract social-theoretic concept, however, will necessarily recognise the structuring elements and name them accordingly. ‘Dimensions’ or ‘systems’ of inequality are not the actions themselves, but patterns or types of relations, which can only be recognised and labelled in the plan view or by way of comparing many individual situations of interaction. Their scientific denomination is always an abstraction, always ‘artificial’ after all, and not a direct representation of reality. It is intended primarily as generalisation across the actual individual situations of interaction. In the theoretical model of the observer, the result is a limited set of etic concepts; hence most theoretical frameworks distinguish between no more than race, class and

⁴ To give two examples, Dhamoon distinguishes between “categories of difference (e.g., race and gender)” and “systems of domination (e.g., racism, colonialism, sexism, and patriarchy)” (Dhamoon, 2011, 233); Applebaum reserves the word “race” “to mark phenomena that were identified as such by contemporaries” and defines “racialization” as “the process of marking human differences according to hierarchical discourses grounded in colonial encounters and their national legacies. The meanings of race over time and space in postcolonial Latin America constitute the subject of our historical analysis; racialization is our conceptual tool.” (Appelbaum, Macpherson, and Roseblatt, 2003, 2).

gender.⁵ This theoretical breakdown of abstractly assumed social relations is artificial, but not arbitrary. The definition of these three dimensions depends on the respective theoretical framework, is comprehensible, and can therefore be criticised or further developed. The explanatory strength of an analytical category like class is that it can clarify how the relations of production/distribution of goods can shape subjectivity; as delimited to gender denoting social organisation of reproduction, the “production of life itself” (Klinger, 2008, 42); as delimited to race, reserved for the construction of “strangeness” in an unequal world order (Klinger, 2008, 42, 43). These “subsystems” of modern society (Klinger, 2008, 54) can alternatively be seen as “ontological realms”, thinking gender in terms of the realm of sexuality/biological reproduction; ethnos in terms of collectivity; and class in terms of production and reproduction of economic life (Anthias, this volume, 31). Of course, it would be closer to reality to speak of ‘a racist-sexist-classist system’, or simply one “interlocking” (Collins, 1993) system. The epistemological problem of denominating these three elements, however, would still not be solved. It is only the abstract and somehow artificial separation of the bundle of multiple strands of power that allows for thinking and communicating them, since existing interdependencies can only become an object of scrutiny if the individual strands are sufficiently distinguished from each other.

The fact alone that dimensions are analytically isolated is not enough to call their subsequent theoretical merging a theory of “interdependency”. The request to study the separated strands of power in an integrated way is basically an artefact of the previous theoretical separation. In contrast, the legitimate desideratum of an interdependency approach undisputedly is: How do interdependencies actually *happen*? This question may in turn be discussed in specific empirical research only. “The work of theory makes sense”, Degele and Winker emphasise correctly, “only with reference to empirical questions” (Degele and Winker, 2008, 196; our translation). To theoretically define etic concepts is the necessary after-effect. How these analytical concepts are to be defined is a theoretical, how they mutually dependent or influence each other ‘in practise’ is an empirical question.

⁵ The triad of race/class/gender is sometimes expanded by a fourth category like “body” (Winker and Degele, 2009, 37) or “sexuality” (Weber, 2010).

AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE DUALISM OF “SOCIETY” AND “INDIVIDUAL”

In recent years, voices were raised that argued for a shift in the focus of attention from the interactional to the structural level. “Although the programmatic associated with intersectionality is supposed to extend from a micro-analytical focus to macro-perspectives aimed at large-scale structures in culture and society, most of the actual studies have concentrated more or less on micro-level analyses” (Knapp, 2005, 259). Therefore, it is called for to no longer carry out mainly micro-studies, in which intricate formations of identifications are examined. Rather, research should also address the question of whether and how structural categories can be examined as “interdependent”. It argues for “a shift from studying identities and categories to studying processes and systems” (Dhamoon, 2011, 240). It postulates that the intersectionality approach, traditionally more concerned with interactions, can be used to advance the socio-theoretical concept building. Therefore the question arises how the many quotidian categorisations relate to structural conditions of society, hence how structure and agency can be theoretically integrated.

And more important perhaps: while we endorse the demand for studies to integrate micro and macro approaches, in light of the reasons discussed so far, it appears questionable to us whether to suggest “interdependencies” as the method of choice for this endeavour. In our opinion, the matter at hand is the basic sociological problem derived from the dualism of “society” and “individual” in the Kantian tradition. It resurrects the dualism of structure and agency, prompting a debate which is “essentially philosophical, and cannot be resolved within sociology” (Anthias, 1998, 513). If we adopted the classical understanding of race, class and gender as ‘structures’ in the Kantian sense, one socio-theoretic question would be revived: How do structures organise (or ‘structure’) actions? Do they determine them? Or do they just offer or restrict a finite set of options? How do abstract concepts of social structure—like class, race or gender, understood as macro-level tools to describe complex power relations that work ‘behind the backs’ and independent from the understanding of the actors—relate to empirically observable and researchable quotidian experiences of humans?

In the history of sociological theory, however, several approaches have been developed that show alternatives to the classical dichotomy of structure and agency. The integration of structure and action has been

addressed, among others, by Mannheim's "*Erfahrungswissen*" (Mannheim, 1980), by Bourdieu's theory of "habitus" (Bourdieu, 1977) or by Giddens' theory of "structuration" (Giddens, 1986). This endeavour is sometimes labelled "praxeological approach" (cf. as an overview of recent sociological debates: Reckwitz, 2003; Reckwitz, 2002). To relate 'conditions' to 'actors' this way already implies to think 'the social' in an integrated way. In this tradition, we believe that still actors have to make their decisions, and they make the decisions acting "toward things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things" (Blumer, 1986). Social reality is always interpretation of reality, always a process of production of interpretations based on former interpretations, shared, passed on, consolidated and modified by way of interactions with others (Keller, 2006, 115). This structure of knowledge—or 'collective systems of meaning'—structures the perception of the world. Following the *Wissenssoziologie* ("Sociology of Knowledge") we conceptualise this structure as merely "guiding actions" (Reckwitz, 2000, 90). The system of knowledge does not consist of determining rules. Rather, routine knowledge is updated contextually and actively in situations of (inter-)actions, yet also adapted and subjected to continuous transformation, since iterations necessarily evoke certain changes (cf. *itération* in the work of Derrida, 1988, 298).

Thus, if we were to ask how to understand the functioning of 'power structures' (derived from the macro-structural point of view), we were back at the interactional level, where the interpretative work is done. And there, actors use entangled quotidian assumptions about identity and difference. Any analytical endeavour had to disentangle these strands of the production of meaning, only to show their essential entanglements. To do so, we suggest thinking of ('structural') power relations as created, maintained and changed through actions, while they are simultaneously incorporated into the experience of individuals. What is at stake in researching interdependencies is to choose an analytical perspective that doesn't fall short of analysing peoples' actions as simultaneously being structured by and structuring the broader, impersonal social relations. To focus on interdependencies of social categorisations thus constitutes, in our opinion, not a theoretical model or a methodological approach, but "a particular analytical sensitivity" (Anthias, this volume, 27). This sensitivity is reflecting on the ineluctable relatedness of social relations in everyday interactions, even if these relations are, theoretically, distinguishable.

RESEARCHING AND RE-THINKING INTERDEPENDENCIES

Having introduced the necessary distinction between emic and etic concepts, it is hardly necessary to emphasise that we do not suppose a simple causal dependence of one of the possible analytical categories from any other; rather they are mutually making each other possible (as much as single parts of articulating joints wouldn't be functional). We suggest understanding their delimitation as a purely theoretic one, introduced by researchers to foster dialogue and theory building, not to describe social "reality" itself. Hence any use of additive terms (like "triple" or "multiple oppression") wouldn't be meaningful in this context. Rather, social categorisations are processes that always mutually influence each other, while etic concepts are signposts that arrange the observed social life in an artificially ordered way.

These considerations lead to two important consequences for our framing of "interdependencies".

First, we employ the term "categorisation" to stress the procedural nature of emic concepts. They do not represent given conceptual entities nor do they rely on unalterable identities, since any identification or indication of belonging emerges in interactions, must be interpreted by the actors and is variable. Thereby we distinguish the term "categorisations" from concepts of analysis. The categorisations, applied by actors in the social processes under scrutiny, are not universally and inherently powerful, but are constantly being made powerful by their actualisation in everyday interactions. To focus on procedural categorisations doesn't mean they are mere snapshots of momentary interactions. Rather, they reflect former interactions and thereby rely on established power relations, but still have to be made meaningful by actors, have to be applied to ever changing situations and are thus to be flexible and can be manipulated by individual and institutionalised agency. This crucial interpretative work of actors grapples with meanings that are socially derived and collectively shaped; but it is at the same time a process of creation and application of these meanings by the actors. To speak of "doing gender" or "doing ethnicity" shows that any categorisation we understand as both a consequence and a condition of real life interactions (cf. West and Zimmerman, 1987).

Second, we ask for not thinking these concepts in an essentialist way. On the contrary, we consider it necessary to view any grouping, be it 'of practice' or 'of analysis' as internally diverse. A social *class*, to mention just the obvi-

ous, is always a very broad aggregation of an economically defined part of the population, including men and women, children and adults; an *ethnic group* can be, of course, stratified economically. This criticism of theoretical essentialisms became crucial in the intersectionality approach, stressing the crossing of various dimensions of discrimination within any social situation under scrutiny (Crenshaw, 1989; Knapp, 2005, 255). This might seem trivial, but even classifications made in social sciences are not to be exempt from this argument. Probably the most obvious theoretical pitfall is the reification of the analytical concepts used, most prominent the cases of gender and race.⁶ Besides, the criticism of theoretical essentialism implies the need to avoid historical analysis in which present-day ideas are transferred to interpretations of the past. An anachronistic terminology uses categories of analysis and applies them to societies where in fact no correlating categories of practice existed or where their relevance is not yet proven. This practice, also called “presentism” (Banton, 2010, 128), might lead to the erroneous assumption of the existence of ‘real’ or otherwise practically relevant social groups. Such a critical argument is raised by Albiez-Wieck in her contribution that questions “the existence of ethnicity” in prehispanic America (this volume). The analytical use of “indigeneity” would be a similar example: *indigena* does not denominate a homogeneous ethnic group anywhere in Latin America, it rather is “highly variable, context-specific and changes over time” (Canessa, 2012, 10). As a political identity used by actors for manifest purposes, this term is of little use as an analytical category.

THE CONTRIBUTIONS IN THIS VOLUME

The individual research projects of the members of the network *Ethnicity, Citizenship, Belonging* are all empirical and interpretative projects and dedicate themselves to the empirical study of social categorisations in concrete situations. For the conference we have invited speakers to investigate the interrelations between social categorisations in Latin American contexts. To these case studies we have added studies on other regions of the world

⁶ This prompted Mara Loveman to state: “‘race’ should be abandoned as a category of analysis”; she suggested “to study ‘race’ only as a category of practice” (Loveman, 1999, 891).

(Europe, Asia). The collected contributions respond to one or more of the following questions posed by the ongoing theoretical debate about intersectional-type works: How do social categorisations interrelate to and how do they mutually constitute each other? What reinforcements, ruptures or modifications of these categorisations happen in this process? To what extent do problems or contradictions arise from a scientific analysis that actually perceives the examined categorisations as interdependent?

In this section we present a brief résumé of each of the following articles. To complement our theoretical thoughts about “interdependencies of social categorisations”, this volume starts with two *theoretical contributions*. These concentrate less on a micro-logic approach, but aim at conceptualising social relations and structures of power.

The first article, by **Floya Anthias**, is of considerable theoretical depth and will therefore open this volume. It reflects on the notion of intersectionality and proposes a particular analytical sensitivity which attends to the centrality of power and social hierarchy and suggests treating intersectionality as a heuristic device. Anthias stresses in her analysis the need to separate categories at the more ontological and categorical levels before investigating how they relate to one another at the more embodied concrete level of social relations. As a conclusion Anthias develops the potential of using a translocational lens as an accompaniment to intersectionality to bring back the idea of inequality into the discussion of difference. The idea of translocations focuses on locations rather than on groups and recognises hierarchical relations.

The article by **Sérgio Costa** brings together two perspectives on the analysis of social inequalities. By looking at the influence of social categories on shaping social positions of individuals and groups from the introduction of slavery in the Americas up to the present, he first explains how far class, ethnicity and gender have been articulated or not within academic debates about race in Brazil. Second, by focusing on historically emerged “inequality regimes” in the case of Afro-descendants in Latin America, he shows that a country’s position in world economy and its internal inequalities are tightly connected. He concludes conceptualising “entangled inequalities” as a better instrument to analyse interdependencies between different regions as well as between diverse social categorisations.

The remaining articles of this volume dedicate themselves to empirically assess the various ways in which social categorisations emerge and are being made powerful by their implementation in everyday social practices.

The next group of contributions to this volume enquires into *performances of identifications*: how subjectivities like “citizen” or “black” are being negotiated and given meaning in social practise, how, in this process, certain social categorisations are being made relevant by the actors, and how power relations are thereby reconfigured.

The article by **Ulrike Schmieder** analyses comparatively how the different categorisations of class, ethnicity, and gender were entangled and reconstructed in the slave and post-slavery societies in Martinique and Cuba. She focuses especially on the social and cultural transformations in Cuba and Martinique after the abolition of slavery in 1848 and 1886 to show how new forms of identity and belonging were created during these struggles. Therefore, using a micro historical approach, Ulrike Schmieder looks at the individual and collective agency of former slaves in the processes of transforming labour systems and reorganising gender relations in the post-slavery period.

By looking at the particular case of Cipriano Reyes, a labour union protagonist during the 1940s, **Ezequiel Adamovsky** argues that the current “black pride” in Argentina is rooted in previous activities by labour organisations that existed—implicitly—throughout the 20th century. Their strategy did not subscribe to the antagonising black-white dichotomy. Instead, the prevailing “melting pot” strategy was used in order to challenge the myth of the “white nation”. It included white working class organisations and employed “negro” as a mark of subalternity. The author shows classist and racist group constructions are inseparable. This suggests a hidden ethnic dimension of class identities in 20th century Argentina, but understood by the actors as, what he calls a non-diasporic “negro” identity, and thus not directly referred to.

The contribution by **Dennis Avilés Irahola** looks at the way in which local actors reconfigured power relations at municipal level after the Law of Popular Participation was passed in Bolivia in 1994. She starts from the assumption that the application of the same decentralisation policies in different social contexts in Bolivia results in different allocations of power depending on the pre-existing local social structures. Therefore she analyses eight rural municipalities in Bolivia and shows the relevance of the interplay of social categorisations, in particular language, origin, occupation, and gender in shaping these new power dynamics.

Olena Prykhodko is interested in how citizen’s “feelings of belonging” can be learned, constructed and modified through the mediatisation and globalisation of culture. By analysing the German reality casting show *Deutschland sucht*

den Superstar (“Germany Seeks the Superstar”), she shows how individual characteristics related to gender, ethnicity and class ascriptions can be managed by the jury of the show and are used by the actors as resources to achieve the image of the expected citizen. Therefore, she conceptualises citizenship as a process of shaping individual identities by creating feelings of collective belonging, in order to produce citizens as both consumers and consumable.

Analysing data collected during her field research in a community in the Ecuadorian highlands, **Daniela Céleri** stresses that it is important to look at ethnicity only as one factor that influences the social status of returning migrant traders. She shows for instance, that when these migrants struggle to be accepted as “Kichwa Otavalos” in their home village, this classification helps them to achieve a stronger social standing but at the same time confronts them with higher expectations about their success as traders. Another seemingly ‘ethnic’ label, the self-classification as “*rund*”, in turn relies on definitions about social and economical responsibilities and recognition of adulthood. Discussing how these categorisations are negotiated among various groups in the village under study, she argues that ethnicity, age, gender and class interdependently shape the social status of its residents.

The third group of contributions, *Permitting and denying belonging*, addresses powerful ascriptions and classifications made “top down”: how national belonging is being defined and affixed to certain groups and not to others. In doing so, these articles enquire how subjectivities change as powerful social actors like national elites or state administrations intervene and thereby shape social groupings.

In her article, **Ursula Regehr** analyses citizenship and nation-building processes in Paraguay starting with independence in the early 19th century. She takes a close look at the dynamics of in- and exclusion of immigrant and indigenous populations in the El Chaco region in the course of the 20th century. She shows how the political inclusion within nation-states as “ethnified citizens” allowed on the one hand, the legitimation of economic agents such as German-speaking Mennonite Communities that came to dominate other segments of the Paraguayan population. On the other hand, she shows the struggle of indigenous populations for the redistribution of resources and their recognition as culturally distinct citizens within the nation state.

By tracing recent changes to the Dominican constitution regarding the acquisition of nationality and showing their connection to immigration policy in Dominican history throughout the 20th century, **Tobias Schwarz**

analyses prevailing notions of collective identity in today's Dominican Republic. He shows how Haitian migrants and their Dominican-born offspring were forcefully, yet partly symbolically, segregated from Dominican population at large by immigration law. This powerful state intervention endowed them with a devaluated legal position and made them become a national 'Other' to a collective notion of being Dominican. Their demoted legal position put them in an economically less powerful position and racialised them as a group at once. This had an effect of group construction: being Dominican could be experienced in real life as of different social status read in terms of 'racial' difference. Therefore, he argues that it would be insufficient to relate the immigrants' formal position to the dimension 'race' alone, but rather sees race and class as interdependently consequential.

The contribution by **Björn Alpermann** adopts the research perspective of intersectionality to study institutional and quotidian ascriptions of belonging that create, sustain and legitimise social inequalities in contemporary China. Comparing the Mao era to the post-1978 reform period he especially focuses on the interplay of the social categories class, citizenship and ethnicity as markers of difference and identification, to show how new social hierarchies are being formed in contemporary China through a complex process of intermeshing social categorisations and party state interventions.

The contributions in the last group, titled *Untangling knowledge systems*, show how a context and power sensitive empirical approach can analyse historical and current cases and ask for the theoretic implications of their findings. They examine the validity and applicability of knowledge systems like neo-colonialism, racism, or sexism within the particular contexts of their studies, and assess their implications, limitations, and contradictions. In doing so, they reveal how human agency deals with power disparities and hegemonic norms, or scrutinise the historicity of knowledge systems.

Sarah Albiez-Wieck in her analysis of social categorisations in the prehispanic Tarascan state in West Mexico takes a close look at the question if ethnicity was a relevant categorisation and if ethnic groups existed in prehispanic Latin America, especially Mesoamerica. After some first theoretical thoughts about analysing interdependencies of social categorisations she argues, that the role of ethnicity was less important than other categorisations. Therefore she takes not only a look at the prehispanic situation, but also at the first decades after the Spanish conquest when important transformations in social categorisations took place.

Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez starts her contribution by looking at political demands of participants in the social struggle during the economic crisis in Spain and discusses the main contradictions of feminisation and precarisation of labour. She illustrates current migration policies in Western Europe and their consequences for undocumented domestic female workers from postcolonial societies. She concludes that contemporary forms of production have not replaced colonial forms of production. Instead, she uses the concept of “coloniality of labour” and its feminisation to show how the intersections of gender, class and ethnicity/race exacerbate the precariousness of domestic work.

In **Caroline Braunmühl’s** article on the argument whether a defendant’s “culture” is legitimately allowed as evidence in criminal court hearings in Germany, Braunmühl shows that addressing presumed differences only applies to groups who are already established as somehow different, thereby aggravating their symbolic exclusion. Based on the fact that “cultural defence” becomes particularly relevant in the context of so-called “honour-related” crimes, she looks at the interplay between racialised and gendered power relations. The author sees gender as being used to further the symbolic exclusion based on racialised categorisations. This ‘profit’ the racialised exclusion gains from gendered arguments is contingent, yet historically relatively stable. Therefore, from her point of view, the interdependency of race and gender in any particular case at hand cannot be predicted, but has to be established empirically by examining how these categories interrelate within the respective context analysed.

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