

Goal of the Conference

While much research has been conducted on the formation of ethnicity and its impact on political mobilization in different parts of the world, the question of whether it is meaningful to speak of a unified single process has remained unresolved. Whether and how this question is addressed has potential consequences for the conceptualization of ethnicity and the closely related concept of 'race' in pre-modern times and in pre-colonial settings all around the globe. At the same time, it shapes our understanding of contemporary formations of ethnic identities and their use in political negotiation processes. In this conference, we attempt to conceptualize ethnicity as a political resource by addressing it from three interrelated angles: how it is viewed by scholars from different academic disciplines; the different forms it takes in various regions of the world; and how it can be investigated with specific reference to distinct historical periods. For this endeavor we have invited scholars from diverse disciplines and global regions to interact in three consecutive roundtable discussions, and to jointly develop a comprehensive approach to ethnicity as a political resource.

About the UoC Forum

The University of Cologne (UoC) Forum "Ethnicity as a Political Resource: Perspectives from Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Europe" started in 2013 and is currently one of eight forums funded under the Institutional Strategy of the University of Cologne within the framework of the German Excellence Initiative.

We are a body of researchers from the Department of Cultural and Social Anthropology, the Department of Iberian and Latin-American History, the interdisciplinary Research Network for Latin America Ethnicity, Citizenship, Belonging, and the Department of African Studies within the University of Cologne. The Forum aims to promote scientific exchange between researchers from different institutes within the University of Cologne as well as with national and international partners. Its objective is to strengthen the interdisciplinary and international dialogue on the formation of ethnic identities and their use as a political resource, using a diachronic and comparative perspective.

Contact

Sofie Steinberger (coordinator)
Email: forum-ethnicity@uni-koeln.de
Tel: 0049-(0)221-470-4149
www.forum-ethnicity.uni-koeln.de

Directors

Michaela Pelican (University of Cologne)
Albert Manke (University of Cologne)

- To register for the conference, please send an email to: forum-ethnicity@uni-koeln.de
www.forum-ethnicity.uni-koeln.de
- All events take place at Neuer Senatsaal, Main building of University of Cologne

EXCELLENT
Funded through the German
Excellence Initiative



CONFERENCE
Conceptualizing Ethnicity as a
Political Resource – across
Disciplines, Regions, and Periods
2–4 April 2014

PUBLIC LECTURE
Toward a More Global Dialogue on
Race and Ethnicity
Yasuko Takezawa, Kyoto University
2 April 2014
18:30–20:00



UNIVERSITY OF COLOGNE FORUM
Ethnicity
AS A POLITICAL RESOURCE
PERSPECTIVES FROM AFRICA,
LATIN AMERICA, ASIA, AND EUROPE

University of Cologne
Neuer Senatsaal | Main building | Albertus-Magnus Platz
www.forum-ethnicity.uni-koeln.de

April 2nd 2014

- 17:00–17:45h Presentation of the UoC Forum, and Meet and Greet (for speakers only)
- 17:45–18:00h Registration
- 18:00–18:30h Welcome address: Michaela Pelican | Albert Manke (UoC Forum Ethnicity)
- 18:30–20:00h
- Public lecture:** Toward a More Global Dialogue on Race and Ethnicity | Yasuko Takezawa (Kyoto University)
- 20:00–22:30h Reception

April 3rd 2014

- 8:00–9:00h Registration
- 9:00–12:30h

Roundtable A: Ethnicity as a political resource viewed by scholars from different academic disciplines

Ethnicity as a political resource is a seminal subject in numerous disciplines. Studies on ethnic formation, indigeneity, autochthony, nationalism, social movements, and transnational mobility often approach these topics from a particular disciplinary point of view. While most researchers agree on the significance of research on ethnic identities and their use as a socio-political resource, the various scopes and disciplinary approaches to conceptualizing these phenomena have not yet been discussed within an interdisciplinary framework. In this roundtable, we attempt to pinpoint these similarities and differences: Are we all talking about the same thing when we use specific terms? What are the underlying paradigms behind the concept of ethnicity and related notions in different disciplines? Similarly, we intend to highlight the distinct methodological approaches used in specific fields, and to discuss how we can most effectively conceptualize and compare various scales and scopes of research. This roundtable endeavours to start a cross-disciplinary dialogue – to identify gaps, compare results, and plan future orientations.

Speakers: Christoph Antweiler (University of Bonn) | Frederik Holst (Humboldt University Berlin) | Carola Lentz (Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz) | Thomas Widlok (UoC Forum Ethnicity) | Lawrence Hirschfeld (The New School For Social Research N.Y.) | Clemens Kroneberg (University of Cologne)

Moderator: Anja Becker (UoC Forum Ethnicity)

April 3rd 2014

14:00–17:30h

Roundtable B: Ethnicity as a political resource in different regions of the world

Much research has been conducted on the use of ethnicity as a political resource in different regions across the globe. All over the world, claims to preferential treatment and/or particular rights reflect classifications of groups as first- or latecomers, claims to historical primacy or primordially of a certain segment of the population, or experiences of oppression and colonialization. Yet the question of whether these political uses of ethnicity are comparable remains unresolved.

Consider the following situations: the legal distinctions between white settlers and the black colonized population in Apartheid South Africa; violent ethnic mobilizations in former Yugoslavia or Rwanda; nativist right-wing politics in today's Europe or the US calling for an end to "multiculturalism"; Scotland's and Catalonia's claims to independence; indigenous mobilisations in Latin America or India; and the resistance of some African, European, and Latin American governments to classifying their national "ethnic minorities" as "indigenous" so as to prevent any questioning of national integrity and the emergence of "plurinational" states. Is it theoretically sound and practically useful to frame the above phenomena – to give just a few examples – as expressions of an "ethnicization of the political"?

Speakers: Christian Büschges (University of Bern) | Dereje Feyissa (Addis Ababa University) | Xi Yuan Li (Sun Yat-Sen University) | Tobias Schwarz (UoC Forum Ethnicity) | Evelyn Hu-Dehart (Brown University)

Moderator: Mario Krämer (UoC Forum Ethnicity)

April 4th 2014

9:00–12:30h

Roundtable C: Ethnicity as a political resource across different historical periods

Various scholars have pointed to the importance of colonial encounter(s) for the emergence of ethnic classifications and identifications, and even spoken of the "invention of race" by European expansionary projects. Hence, ethnicity didn't exist in the Americas and Africa before the European conquest, or in Imperial China, or in the European Middle Ages – or did it? Can the concept of ethnicity primarily be traced back to European colonial expansion – or can we also find indications in the history of other empires or in other cycles of global development? Regarding the latter, some scholars have brought into focus the rise of "Western" dominance in comparison to "the East" (especially China) since the late 18th century. It is thus not surprising that in European historiography the concept of ethnicity has largely been linked to (proto-)national narratives. As we can still observe today, the emergence of the nation state has led to new and stronger ethnic boundaries, and the widespread use of ethnicity as a strategic resource.

It is the aim of this roundtable to explore useful concepts to describe historical processes of negotiation of collective identities between different actors (including the state), and to elaborate a common scientific framework across time and space.

Speakers: Rachel Sarah O'Toole (University of California) | Walter Pohl (University of Vienna) | Antonio Sáez-Arance (UoC Forum Ethnicity) | Lok Siu (Berkeley University) | Cassandra Mark (University of Basel)

Moderator: Sarah Albiez-Wieck (UoC Forum Ethnicity)

April 4th 2014

14:00–16:00h

Final Plenary Discussion: Conceptualizing ethnicity as a political resource

Speakers: Wolfgang Gabbert (Leibniz University Hannover) | Tongxue Tan (Sun Yat-Sen University) | Michaela Pelican (UoC Forum Ethnicity)

Moderator: Albert Manke (UoC Forum Ethnicity)

16:00 Farewell address, Michaela Pelican (UoC Forum Ethnicity)