

**The transregional production, translation, and appropriation of knowledge: actors, institutions, and discourses**

**Veranstalter:** Ibero-American Institute Berlin

**Datum, Ort:** 10.10.2014–11.10.2014, Berlin

**Bericht von:** Peter Birle / Sandra Carreras / Friedhelm Schmidt-Welle, Ibero-American Institute Berlin

The workshop took place as part of the Ibero-American Institute's (IAI) core research activities from 2010 to 2014 with a focus on „cultural transfer and scientific exchange between Europe and Latin America.“

This transfer was not viewed as the unilateral transmission of ideas and expertise from Europe to Latin America, but rather as the circulation, albeit strongly asymmetrical, of ideas and expertise among the two regions. The central questions of the IAI research focused on the characteristics of selection, transfer, and appropriation processes; the manifestation of asymmetries, power imbalances, and dependencies; the role of various actor groups (academics, intellectuals, politicians, etc.) and institutions (scientific, cultural, political, etc.); mutual epistemological influences; as well as changes to the observed processes throughout their recorded history.

In his introduction to the workshop subject, PETER BIRLE (Berlin) identified four distinct approaches to analyzing the cross-border production and circulation of knowledge. A first approach is generally associated with the positivist paradigm. It involves analyzing the regularities of relations between scientists and among their fields of study, as well as the diffusion of Western scientific values. Another approach emphasizes scientific practices and micro-transactions related to the circulation of knowledge. Such an approach would examine the role of universities and laboratories, for instance, or the formation of scientific networks and epistemic communities. The third approach is that of postcolonialism, whose proponents stress the long-term effects of colonial structures on the economic, political, social, and epistemic conditions in the former colonies. They argue that Europe transferred not only institutions and social structures, but also a complex and hierarchical or-

ganization of knowledge in academic disciplines according to European (Western, North Atlantic) models of science. In the view of postcolonial authors, the voices of suppressed communities and societies are largely ignored at the global scale due to a „coloniality of knowledge,“ and instead the establishment of eurocentrism as the only permissible scientific perspective has caused a multitude of skills that are unaligned with the modalities of Western scientific research to be considered of lesser value, folklore, or outright insignificant. A fourth approach is to analyze the circulation of knowledge using Bourdieu's field theory. Empirical projects applying this approach to Latin American countries have pointed out that the acceptance and circulation of foreign ideas depend to a great extent on the characteristics of the local field. This was especially true during the founding phases of scientific institutions in Latin America, when Germany, France, and the United States often served as models.

Few observers would deny the existence of strong asymmetries in the international and transregional production and circulation of knowledge, and yet Birle warns that it is unproductive to view Latin America as a region dominated by „scientific colonialism.“ Instead, he described it as a region with a long tradition of its own intellectual and scientific production, as exemplified by modernism, structuralism, the development policies of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL), dependency theories, and liberation theology. Rather than rely on abstract models to establish *a priori* the existence of a coloniality of knowledge, Birle says it is more productive to analyze historically specific periods of scientific autonomy and independence in order to better understand the complexity of transregional conveyance, translation, and appropriation of knowledge. Indeed, that was the principle goal of this workshop.

The first panel in the workshop analyzed different concepts of Latin American (or rather, Latin American studies) cultural critique from the viewpoint of historiography, comparative literature, cultural studies, and anthropology: acculturation, „mestizaje“, transculturation, cultural translation

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and appropriation, peripheral modernism, and transmodernity. In the opening presentation, HECTOR PÉREZ BRIGNOLI (San José, Costa Rica) confronted the notion of acculturation from 1930s US-American social anthropology by Redfield and others with the concept of transculturation developed by Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz. Latin American theory construction rightly questions the notion of acculturation, since it negates the implicit or explicit violence inherent in the processes of cultural contact. Nevertheless, both the notions of „mestizaje“ and acculturation as well as transculturation have their places in the interpretation of historical processes, because the application of distinct terms renders various historical conflicts more tangible.

Pérez Brignoli criticized extending the alterity concept beyond the Conquista, since strictly speaking the theory only claims validity for the early period of cultural contact and is not applicable to the 21st century.

MABEL MORAÑA (Saint Louis, USA) also examined the concept of transculturation in her cultural theory discourse on its different formulations by Fernando Ortiz, Mariano Picón Salas, and Ángel Rama, illustrating it in the context of other ideas such as anthropophagy, heterogeneity, and hybridity. According to Moraña, all of these concepts share a common point of departure in their critique of the (postcolonial) national cultures in Latin America. This is where she began her own review of the aforementioned approaches, which she said are no longer adequate to describe current globalization and migration processes as well as the increasing deterritorialization of identity structures (transnationality). She called for the exploration of new theoretical approaches to analyzing contemporary cultural developments.

CHRISTIANE STALLAERT (Antwerpen) discussed the concepts of cultural translation and transmodernity. The latter term in particular follows Moraña's critique of the overcome theories of cultural transfers. Stallaert made the case for an analysis of both local and regional processes, and of national as well as inter- and transnational ones with all their diverse correlations. Translations have an important role to play here, both from one his-

torical context into another as well as in the process of constructing scientific theory.

FRIEDHELM SCHMIDT-WELLE (Berlin) analyzed a specific case of cultural translation, namely the appropriation of European romanticism (in this case literary French social romanticism) by Argentinian author Esteban Echeverría during the first half of the 19th century. Schmidt-Welle examined three facets: the constitution of the romantic author's character, the adaptation of the ideas of political liberalism, and the eclectic appropriation of romantic aesthetics. It became clear that the precepts of European romanticism are appropriated and transculturated in a deliberately selective manner in order to functionalize them for one's own ideological intents while using their reference as an authoritative argument for debates at the national level. In this context, transculturality proved to be a fruitful term, albeit one that shouldn't be applied to today's historical processes without reservation.

The second panel explored different cases of trans/nationalized scientific knowledge in Latin America until the early 20th century. KAREN MACKNOW LISBOA (São Paulo, Brazil) demonstrated how the literature concerning voyages and scientific expeditions in 19th century Brazil allows the observation of diverse, hidden, and/or explicit transitions in an area of contact where many agents are acting at the same time. Local informants would serve as mediators by passing information to the travelers and translating it for them, while the voyagers themselves would act as translators of their travel experiences for their own cultures. Over the years, the travel literature itself has become the subject of study and, more often than not, of neocolonial critique.

ANDRÉS JIMÉNEZ ÁNGEL (Eichstätt) analyzed the transfer of linguistics from Europe to Columbia and its appropriation in the Latin American country. He underlined that the differences in both situations should not be interpreted as obstacles that would have prevented an ostensibly „adequate“ development of the discipline, but rather as an expression of material, social, political, and cultural connections as well as an interwoven aggregate of transfer and appropriation processes.

CRISTINA ALARCÓN (Berlin) studied the

transfer of a German educational model to Chile and its subsequent diffusion in other Latin American countries. On the one hand, her case study demonstrated that the implementation of the „German reform“ led to a fundamental reorganization of Chilean educational structures, and on the other hand it showed the close connection between North-South and South-South transfer processes.

An analysis of the activities of the German Scientific Society (Deutscher Wissenschaftlicher Verein) and the Institución Cultural Argentino-Germana by SANDRA CARRERAS (Berlin) illuminated the myriad factors shaping the goals and opportunities of two associations that saw themselves as mediators between Germany and Argentina. This included individual initiatives, its members' degree of professionalization, their nationalities, the institutions' relationships with the German colony and the Argentinian scientific community, Germany's foreign cultural policies, the policies of internationalization on the part of Argentinian universities, and the international political situation.

The third panel was dedicated to knowledge production and scientific relations in the second half of the 20th century. First, SÉRGIO COSTA (Berlin) introduced different approaches for the study of modernity in Latin America. He distinguished between three lineages: one that portrays the development of modernity as a process of Westernization, another that stresses Latin America's interrelations with global modernity, and a third lineage of intermediary interpretation that views Latin American development as a manifestation of *plural modernities*.

NICOLÁS GÓMEZ NUÑEZ (Santiago de Chile) discussed the concept of social technology, a specific type of collective action relating to interactions that seek the resolution of intersubjectively relevant problems. This accords a special significance to the connection between common knowledge and technical-scientific expertise. Gómez was particularly interested in social technologies developed at the interface of economic and social spheres.

ENRIQUE FERNÁNDEZ DARRAZ (Santiago de Chile) first developed a historical perspective on German-Chilean relations and

then proposed a system of periodization for the analysis of bilateral scientific relations since the mid-20th century. As turning points he identified the overthrow of Chilean president Salvador Allende in 1973, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the increasing internationalization of scientific systems since the middle of the past decade.

In conclusion, Peter Birle examined the development of Chilean social sciences since the 1960s in light of four key variables: context (institutional system, development model, ideological-cultural climate), institutionalization, content (dominating theoretical approaches, research priorities), and internationalization (cooperation model, orientation criteria, disciplines). One of his conclusions was that the 1973 coup presaged a restructuring and deinstitutionalization of Chilean social sciences, which caused a loss of all the advantages and developmental advances that had existed vis-à-vis the social sciences of other Latin American countries until 1973. This development was only partially reversed even after the return to democracy.

The workshop also featured a round table on the historical perspective of trans/national production and appropriation of knowledge with BARBARA POTTHAST (Cologne), MATTHIAS MIDDELL (Leipzig), and Hector Pérez Brignoli. The participants emphasized not only the existing asymmetries of power and knowledge on a global scale, but also with a view towards Latin America the frequently observed suppression of indigenous bodies of knowledge. In this context, Barbara Potthast drew parallels to inter-societal processes otherwise known from gender studies. Matthias Middell pointed out that knowledge had been circulating across borders long before the emergence of nation states; what changed with the advent of nation states was the increasing institutionalization of knowledge production, and the use of knowledge for the purposes of legitimacy. The podium participants agreed that despite all the tendencies towards transnationalization, a nationalizing logic continues to dominate the production of knowledge today. The shift in perspective towards a global history and the advent of concepts such as „entangled history“ or „histoire croisée“ only partially cor-

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respond to stronger cooperation among Western and non-Western historians. To consider seriously a concept such as „histoire croisée“ requires closer cooperation with colleagues from the subject region, yet it is still common for these concepts to be used for the perpetuation of existing asymmetries on a global scale.

Finally, it is important to indicate two central challenges to the transregional production of knowledge that were a recurring cause of discussion throughout the workshop. Firstly, there is the fact that several of the concepts used here could be described as „traveling concepts“ in the sense that they are not conclusively defined but instead travel through various scientific disciplines and across time, geographic regions, and different languages. This results in a diverse set of obstacles, translation issues, questions of portability and the validity of principles in contexts beyond their original design, and even misunderstandings. The second challenge concerns the tension between structural-historic case studies and more abstract theory construction processes. At least from the point of view of social science, there is a need to go beyond the dense descriptions of specific cases by consistently seeking references back to theories and more abstract analyses.

### Conference Overview:

#### *Welcome adress and introduction*

Peter Birle (Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut, Berlin)

#### *Panel 1: Transculturation and cultural translation in Latin America, 19th and 20th century*

Moderator: Iken Paap (Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut, Berlin)

Comment: Vittoria Borsò (Heinrich-Heine-Universität, Düsseldorf)

Hector Pérez Brignoli (Universidad de Costa Rica, San José), *The concept of transculturation*

Mabel Moraña (Washington University, St. Louis, MO), *Transculturation and Latin Americanism*

Christiane Stallaert (Universiteit Antwerpen), *Transculturation, cultural translation and transmodernity*

Friedhelm Schmidt Welle (Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut, Berlin), *Translation and transculturation of Romanticism in Esteban Echeverría*

#### *Panel 2: Trans/nationalisation of scientific knowledge in Latin America until the beginning of the 20th century*

Moderator: Friedhelm Schmidt Welle (Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut, Berlin)

Comment: Irina Podgorny (Universidad Nacional de La Plata)

Karen Macknow Lisboa (Universidad de São Paulo), *Travelers in Brasil: theoretical and practical aspects of the transfer of culture and knowledge*

Andrés Jiménez Ángel (Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt), *Science without discipline: the transfer of the „science of language“ in Colombia, 1867-1911*

Cristina Alarcón (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin), *From import to export. The Institute for Education as a place for the formation of high school teachers in Latin America (1889-1939)*

Sandra Carreras (Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut, Berlin), *The Deutscher Wissenschaftlicher Verein (DWV) and the Institución Cultural Argentino-Germana as intermediary associations in the transfer of knowledge between Argentina and Germany*

#### *Round table: The trans/national production and appropriation of knowledge in historical perspective*

Moderator: Sandra Carreras (Ibero-Amerikanisches-Institut, Berlin)

Matthias Middell (Universität Leipzig) / Héctor Pérez Brignoli (Universidad de Costa Rica, San José) / Barbara Potthast (Universität zu Köln)

#### *Panel 3: Scientific relations and production of knowledge in the second half of the 20th century*

Moderator: Nikolaus Werz (Universität Rostock)

Comment: Barbara Göbel (Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut, Berlin)

Sérgio Costa (Freie Universität Berlin), *The re-*

search on modernity in Latin America: lineages and dilemmas

Nicolás Gómez Nuñez (Universidad Central, Santiago de Chile), Methodical notes for approaching the social technologies of a distributive and reciprocative economy in the social urban space in Latin America

Enrique Fernández Darraz (Universidad de Tarapacá, Santiago de Chile), Players and institutions of scientific exchange between Germany and Chile during the second half of the 20th century

Peter Birle (Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut, Berlin), Latin-American social sciences between autonomy and dependence

*Final discussion*

Moderator: Peter Birle (Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut, Berlin)

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