

# Approaching Ethnoheterogenesis - Membership, Ethnicity, and Social Change in Contemporary Societies

**Veranstalter** Leibniz Universität Hannover, Institut für Soziologie

**Veranstaltungsort** Leibnizhaus Hannover

**Termin** 14.12.2017 - 15.12.2017 ganztags

International Conference in Cooperation with the Section "Migration und Ethnische Minderheiten" of the DGS. Registration possible until December 1st, 2017.

The study of societal change and ethnic relations has been a core pursuit in Sociology, both in the past and in the present, especially - though not exclusively - in historical contexts marked by heightened migration. This conference aims to refine the theoretical understanding of social and cultural processes regarding the formation of ethnicities and ethnic diversity (Yancey et al 1976, Bös 2010).

The specific contribution of this conference goes to the research context of migrants and migrant descendants; wherein conceptual debates on self-perceptions, modes of belonging, group formation, and collective subjectivities continue to be at the core of theoretical considerations (Cohen 1974, Glazer and Moynihan 1975, Banton 2008). Importantly, the conference also goes beyond this context: studying the genesis and continuously shifting social forms of ethnicities is heuristically important in that it can help us clarify processes of socio-, cultural-, and political change in society at large (Bell 1975, Bös 2011, Banton 2011).

Researching the emergence of ethnicities has a long tradition in diverse social sciences and in the humanities. The term ethnoheterogenesis originally described constitutive processes of ethnic groups, their possible fissions, de-ethnization, expansion, or new formations over time and space (Singer 1962, Voss 2008). From

the mid-1970s onward, in American Sociology, ethnoheterogenesis was also used to grasp societal assimilation, integration, and change caused by ethnic diversification (Greeley 1974), as such describing socio-cultural change among both minority and majority groupings and in society at large.

However, it appears that current analytical concepts and frameworks to describe the genesis of ethnicities and societal change through ethnic diversification are too limited to grasp these complex and multi-dimensional formative processes (Barth 1969, Fardon 1987, Thompson 2011, Bös 2015). These concepts (e.g., assimilation, identity, integration, diversity, inclusion, multi-ethnic societies, etc.) often represent normative self-descriptions by civil society rather than analytical categories of heuristic value. Therefore, we propose the concept of Ethnoheterogenesis (EHG) as a starting point to discuss multidimensional models of specific forms of societization (Vergesellschaftung), which involve ethnic framing and affiliations of individuals, groupings, and macro groups (Tiesler 2015). Rather than reducing such formative processes to linear models, new concepts such as Ethnoheterogenesis explicitly address the dialectic of homogenization and heterogenization in the genesis of ethnicities, as well as the normality of de-ethnization and multiple options regarding ethnic affiliation (Waters 1990).

The aim of the conference is to further develop EHG or other new alternatives as analytical categories for processes of socio-cultural change in complex settings of transnationally constituted societies that can be coined ethnoheterogeneous (Claussen 2013). We invite international scholars for a critical discussion in favor of further theorizing the following themes:

1. What changes in ethnic framing, ethnic affiliation, and multiplicity of memberships / belongings can be observed in current times of heightened mobility and how can they be analyzed?
2. How are the processes of (de-)ethnization interwoven with social inequality (economic, legal, political, etc.)?
3. How does ethnicity function as an element in the structuring of (world) society?

Keynote Speakers:

- □ Nadjie Al-Ali, Centre for Gender Studies, SOAS
- □ Thomas D. Hall, Prof. Emeritus, Department of History, DePauw University

Program (PDF)

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