

## Project B2

### **Ethnicity at University: Processes of Ethnic Demarcation and Relations of Inequality Over the Course of Studies**

Disciplines and research topics:

Disciplines: Social Anthropology

Research topics: Ethnicity, Migration, Organizational Anthropology

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This project addresses the interface between heterogeneity and potential relations of inequality at universities, and analyzes the processes of ethnic boundary-making that students with a migration background experience and perceive as significant. The aim is to identify possible mechanisms at work in the relationships between different institutional conditions and the perceptions and interpretations of students. It is assumed that ethnic heterogeneity in daily university life is a criterion of distinction that affects a student's experience during the study course. However, it is not yet clear whether, how, and when ethnicity interacts with other criteria of social categorization: class, gender, "race," religion, or sexual orientation. The project aims to clarify whether processes of ethnicization and self-ethnicization over the course of studies are experienced as generating inequalities that are later reflected in academic performance, occupational qualification, and access to jobs. It also remains to be seen whether students with migrant background perceive "ethnicity" as a feature of heterogeneity that is crucial in offering them special action options and relevant for their structures of meaning without generating or reinforcing inequality.

By conceiving of the university as a heterogeneous social location, the project applies a perspective that analyzes the emergence and dynamics of social constellations not only through social action but also in terms of the dependence of such action on institutional structures. The intended approach to modeling the university as an organization draws on the subject-centered "theory of organizing" (Weick) without losing sight of the structuring characteristics of the university as an organization. Because the analysis focuses on the students as subjectively acting and perceiving agents over the course of their studies, both the theoretical and the methodological approach are strongly embedded in the processual and constructivist paradigm of qualitative social research.

During the first funding period, the project intends to compare two universities and different courses of study selected from the fields of the humanities/social sciences and natural sciences/technology. It is of particular importance that the compared faculties and study courses lead to different occupational profiles and that the motivation for studying and the hurdles to be taken at the respective faculties should differ significantly.