Jens Schneider

Boundaries of Self and Others: National Identity in Brazil and Germany

Abstract

National identity is an omnipresent issue as much in Europe as in Latin America. Yet, it continues to be difficult to grasp, especially with regard to its role in the triangle between state, national community and the individual. The article suggests the experimental methodology of an 'ethnography of discourse' to find out about the ways individuals construct their belonging to the Nation and their relation to collective master narratives of Self and Other. These constructions are analysed specifically along the lines of two basic aspects: the definitional criteria for belonging and the role of diversity and Otherness. Brazil and Germany are two especially suited and contrasting examples to study these aspects in a comparative way – based on almosts four years of ethnographic fieldwork in both settings and interviews with opinion leaders from media, politics and culture. The individual utterances in the interviews are analysed also with regard to their relationship to the wider political-historical and discursive context, as reflected, e.g., in citizenship regulations. As a main result, in both settings internal Others play the most prominent role for self-definitions, but these Others are completely differently constructed: along camouflaged ethnic lines in Germany, and according to social class in Brazil.

Der Autor

Jens Schneider ist Ethnologe und Migrationsforscher. Er hat in Tübingen über das Thema Deutsche Identität promoviert und danach zwei Jahre mit einem Forschungsstipendium der Deut-

schen Forschungsgemeinschaft in Rio de Janeiro verbracht. Seit 2005 ist er Senior Researcher am Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies der Universiteit van Amsterdam.

 * Post-Adresse: Dohrnweg 5, 22767 Hamburg

E-Mail: j.schneider@uva.nl

Resumen

Jens Schneider

Los Límites de lo Propio: Identidad Nacional en Brasil y Alemania

Seguiendo un experimento metodológico (una 'etnografía del discurso') el artículo examima construcciones de identidad nacional en Alemania y el Brasil. El autor analisa particularmente la relación de narrativas y estratégias discursivas individuales con el contexto de la sociedad, por ejemplo con relación a la legislación de ciudadanía, al contexto político-histórico y a las narrativas generales del discurso social. El análisis se basa en una investigación de campo de varios años y en entrevistas con líderes de opinión en medios de comunicación, la política y la cultura.

Abstract

Jens Schneider

Das nationale Selbst und die Anderen: Grenzen nationaler Identität in Brasilien und Deutschland

Mit Hilfe eines methodischen Experiments („Diskursethnographie") untersucht der Artikel individuelle Konstruktionen nationaler Identität in Deutschland und Brasilien. Analysiert wird insbesondere das Verhältnis individueller Erzählweisen und Diskursstrategien zu den gesellschaftlichen Rahmenbedingungen etwa in Form des Staatsangehörigkeitsrechts, des politisch-historischen Kontexts und der master narratives der gesellschaftlichen Rede. Dies basiert auf mehrjährigen Feldforschungen in beiden Ländern und Interviews mit Meinungsmachern in Medien, Politik und Kultur.

Resumem

Jens Schneider

Os Limites do Próprio e dos Outros: Identidade Nacional no Brasil e na Alemanha

Seguindo um experimento metodológico (a 'etnografia do discurso') o artigo examina construções de identidade nacional na Alemanha e no Brasil. O autor analisa particularmente a relação de narrativas e estratégias discursivas individuais com o contexto da sociedade, por exemplo na forma da lei de cidadania, do contexto político-histórico e das narrativas gerais do discurso social. O análise basa-se numa pesquisa de campo de vários anos nos dois paises e em entrevistas com líderes de opinião na mídia, na política e no âmbito da cultura.

1. Introduction

Identity has been a central issue in Latin America, as much with regard to ethnic identities and 'race relations' as to national and continental self-definitions. The quest for national identities has been a driving force in much of the continent's intellectual and cultural production throughout the 19th and 20th century. The Latin American republics, following the example of the USA, were the 'Creole pioneers' (Anderson 1991: 47ff.) of modern national-ism and nation-building, gaining independence long before the era of coloni-alism and 'official nationalism' (Seton-Watson 1977: 148) fully unfolded. Nevertheless, the development of national identity in Latin America is fre-quently considered somewhat problematic. Practically since independence, identity formation in Latin America has been torn between nationalism, the Bolivarian idea of continental unity, and economic, political and intellectual dependency from Europe and the United States.

From the perspective of Nation Theory and the study of nationalism, Latin America's history and pioneering role makes it a particularly interesting case. Different from most of the 'classic' European examples, Latin America is unique for its cultural homogeneity in many of those central elements most commonly used for national self-definitions, particularly language and relig-ion. By far most of the Latin American nation-states use a very similar version of Spanish as the official idiom and the most common vernacular. The same is true for religion, not only with regard to the dominance of Catholicism, but also for the rise and gaining influence of Pentecostal congregations. On the other side, all Latin American nations show a remarkable cultural heterogeneity inside their respective territories, and all Latin American nations have been shaped by immigration. Cultural heterogeneity and a diversity of origins can thus be identified as one main characteristic in Latin American nation-building.

Latin America and Europe offer themselves for comparison especially in the following aspect: In general, European nation-states did not consider themselves to be immigration countries (and some maintain this to the pre-sent), even though, of course, all 'Western' European nation-states have been confronted with major immigration processes for centuries, but especially over the last sixty years. In European national ideologies, different from Latin America, cultural differences have traditionally been constructed and taken care of less within the nation than between nation-states and along their borders.

Boundary tracking and border regimes, as much as definitions of citizen-ship and the regulations to admit outsiders as 'naturalised nationals', stand at the very core of national self-definitions because they directly determine 'In' and 'Out', who belongs and who does not. This is why, next to studies on the

history of nation-states (and their borders), quite some attention in Nation Theory has been paid to comparisons of legal definitions of citizenship.[1]

The other central aspect is the way in which national self-definitions deal with cultural diversity and heterogeneity – a characteristic which is especially brought to the fore by migration processes of all kinds. Since, as stated above, cultural arguments play a major role in the imagination of 'commonness' in a national community, cultural heterogeneity and processes of apparent cultural diversification complicate the notion of an unambiguous and uniform 'national character'.

2. Exploring Contrasts: Brazil and Germany

The present article explores these aspects by comparing two contrasting 'cases' from Latin America and Europe. Brazil and Germany differ with regard to many basic elements of national identity construction – from citizenship legislation (ius sanguinis versus ius soli) to the role of homogeneity versus heterogeneity in the imagination of the 'National Self'. Moreover, the institutional and external conditions for nation-building have been quite different, considering the strength of political and state institutions, the size of the territory in combination with infrastructure and population density, and the influence and 'pervasiveness' of mass media and political discourse. The general level of education and regional differentiation, and the importance of social inequality and class divisions are additional relevant factors.

With regard to national ideology, a basic difference is symbolised by the Brazilian notion of the três raças fundadoras ('three founding races', i.e. Portuguese, Africans and Indigenous) as opposed to the German Kulturnation. Even in Latin America, Brazil is certainly unmatched with regard to its diversity of cultures and 'colours'. In its nation-building process, especially after the abolition of slavery in 1888, Brazil particularly embraced the idea of 'racial miscegenation' (cf. Skidmore 1993: 65f.). At the same time, Brazil became a country of large-scale immigration from Europe and Japan, demanding a national ideology fitting to integrate these new populations into the national community as quick as possible (cf. Seyferth 1990; Lesser 1999).

By contrast, the German concept of Kulturnation in its origin presupposed cultural homogeneity as the main ground for definition. In a reaction to the failure of gaining a unified national territory before 1871, German nationalism defined the Nation as the community of German speaking people, not only divided over dozens of small states, but also dispersed in the territories of other Nations, such as Russia and Austria-Hungary. Obviously, under such circumstances, 'German culture' could not be anything uniform or homoge-

---

[1]   See e.g. Bryant 1997; Soysal 1994.

neous, and, in fact, the variety of German dialects and folk traditions has been something German national identity has been particularly proud of. But, in order to introduce some 'transcendent' and essentialising notion, 'German culture' was increasingly represented in genetic terms and 'blood'-metaphors, as something being passed from generation to generation through biological descent. As a consequence, purity and non-miscegenation gained central importance in the construction and reproduction of 'Germanness'. The ideal of 'racial purity' is thus no invention of the Nazis, but it obviously found its most terrible consequences in the mass murder of allegedly 'impure', i.e. Jewish or Gypsy Germans in the Nazi period.[2]

These contrasting approaches to nationality in the two countries are still directly reflected in current citizenship regulations. Brazil offers automatic access to nationality on the criterion of birth. It accepts that immigrants themselves might never feel fully at home in their new country, but it puts a clear claim on the second generation born in the country. This was the most appropriate answer to the need of a rapid integration of millions of immigrants. The ius soli-principle even became part of a specific Brazilian brand of nationalist rhetoric, as, for example, in the famous slogan of the Estado Novo in the 1930s: Quem nasce no Brasil é brasileiro ou traidor! ('Who is born in Brazil is either Brazilian or a traitor!'). German citizenship law, by contrast, puts the emphasis on a German descent line: independently from the place of birth, children of German parents (and even grandparents) are entitled to German citizenship (ius sanguinis). On the other side, birth on the German territory alone does not provide access to citizenship. Only in 2000 a first element of ius soli was introduced: the automatic access to German citizenship for any child with at least one parent born in Germany or having been in the country since the age of fourteen. So, even now, the ius soli-based access to citizenship is actually granted to the third generation only.

3. National Identity as a Theoretical Problem

Historical developments and institutional arrangements are two important aspects in the study of nationality, and they have, of course, been analysed in many publications on Brazil and Germany respectively. Far less attention has

---

[2]   Cf. Douglas 1970, Gilman 1992 and Linke 1997 on the significance of 'pureness (of blood)' in German images of 'race' and 'nation' in different periods of history. Following Etienne Balibar, anti-Semitism is a particularly good example to show that Othering-mechanisms do not need the visibility of difference or any other sort of 'objective' cultural, physiological or structural basis for making a distinction. When 'objective criteria' are not available they are invented, and the NS definition of Jewishness was neither based on cultural criteria, nor respecting the Jewish criteria for self-definition – which among other things saw, of course, no opposition between being German and being Jewish at the same time (cf. Craig 1982: 159f.).

been paid to the more anthropological aspects of national identity, i.e. the role of belonging to a 'national community' in strategies of self-positioning of individuals in their everyday practices. This is not to say that national identity has not been a main topic in all sorts of publications – on the contrary. But most of these publications suffer from what could be called the 'ontological dilemma': they generally operate, directly or indirectly, with 'typical' or common behaviour, supposedly characteristic for the members of the national community.

The main theoretical problems of this approach have been brilliantly analysed with regard to Brazilian 'national character' by Dante Moreira Leite as early as 1954 (Leite 1976). According to Leite, it takes the observation of behaviour as the ground to deduce general patterns and 'character traits' in society. To be able to speak about national identity or 'character', these patterns must be somehow reproduced in the personalities of the nationals, which is then again used to explain certain behaviour among them – a classical tautology. A second point of critique is the selection of the ethnographic samples: as Leite points out, all these studies are based on observations of very small segments of the respective populations, e.g. Nazis in the case of Germany or rural elites in the case of Brazil (Leite 1976: 44f., 65f.), which hardly allows for the generalisations that have been drawn (cf. Cohen 1994).

Yet, members of national communities seem to have far less problems with logical and theoretical incoherence when identifying themselves as nationals, and denominating supposedly significant differences to their respective neighbours and 'Others'. Apparently, even the size of a national territory and the existing cultural complexities in its population do not make a substantial difference. Practically regardless of their size and complexity, nations function as communities whose degree of cohesion among their members seems comparable to small-scale ethnic groups or village societies.

Especially the extraordinary ability of nations to mobilise their members, even to the degree of being 'willing to die for it' (cf. Anderson 1991: 7, 144), motivated historians in the early 1980s to take a closer look at the ways nations became a main reference frame for feelings of belonging throughout the world (cf. Anderson 1991; Hobsbawm 1990; Hobsbawm/Ranger 1983; Gellner 1983). Apart from the apparent incoherence of virtually all national self-imaginations, it was the ideological versatility of nationalist thought – easily combining , e.g., with fascism as with liberalism or even socialism – which led Benedict Anderson to conclude that 'it would make things easier if one treated nationalism as if it belonged with 'kinship' and 'religion', rather than with ideologies like fascism or liberalism' (Anderson 1991: 5).

The members of a national community do not need to 'objectively' share cultural or other forms of common behaviour to feel as one, and history can play no other role than to retrospectively construct common origins and to

'invent' traditions (Hobsbawm/ Ranger 1983). But what are the means and mechanisms, then, of community and identity formation, that are powerful enough to incorporate 80 or 175 million people into one national 'master narrative' of belonging?

If we look at identity in its strict sense and its basic functions, it basically builds categories of 'In' and 'Out' through the proclamation of belonging to a community:

> Ethnic identity [...] is simply a sorting or labelling device. It has, in principle, nothing to do with modes of behaviour, be they directly observed by the fieldworker or actually enunciated by the informant. (Devereux 1978: 145)

As the term 'enunciated' indicates, identity is closely connected to language: It is only through 'naming' and 'categorisation' that the recognition of 'reality' becomes possible – not only individually, but also as a collective (cf. Borneman 1992: 8ff.; Barth 2000: 20f.). Names and categories allow our cognition to manage the complexities of stimuli collected by our perception. But names and categories need to be collectively represented, otherwise communication and 'cultural intimacy' (Herzfeld 1997) would not be possible.

The use of common names and categorisations requires their constant transmission and communication among the members of the group, in other words: it requires a 'formational system' which arranges certain sets of statements (or narratives) into 'common principles of diffusion and distribution' – which is, actually, one of Michel Foucault's definitions of discourse (Foucault 1994: 156). In this definition, discourse is understood as language conventions embedded in a larger social and communicational context, through which it gains its power and role. With regard to identity, discourse can be seen as one of the main platforms on which identities are primarily constructed and constantly reproduced. Discourse, as much as language in general, is stable enough to guarantee continuity over time and generations, but it is also very flexible and therefore apt to rapidly adopt changes of all kinds.

Discursive constructions gain their force and persistence precisely through their possible disconnection from specific practices and circumstances. They are therefore not bound to be 'true reflections' of everyday cultural and social behaviour to perform their function as structuring principles for perception and interpretation, although they obviously do exert some influence on individual and group behaviour. The observed incoherence of the Nation's cultural and ethnographic 'claims' in comparison to its empirical 'realities' (cf. Anderson 1991: 5f.; Gellner 1983: 124f.) should, in fact, be considered a precondition for solid community formation and successful identification among the members. If this formation would actually depend on certain 'objective'

cultural and/or historical minimum requirements, even the prospect of cultural change would seriously threaten the community as such.[3] Therefore an interesting question is: How do individuals construct and position themselves as nationals, and what is the use they make of collectively shared narratives and established national ideologies?

4. Towards an Ethnography of National Discourse

As shown above, nations like Brazil and Germany cannot be ethnographically investigated in the classical sense – even if it were possible to send out thousands of ethnographers. But, the discursive fundaments of national identity construction make it actually accessible for another type of 'ethnographic' research: since all individuals, for the above mentioned reasons and in one way or the other, need to make reference to a common framework of discursive formations and master narratives, this framework is represented in each individual's everyday speech, and in all sorts of 'texts', be they literally printed, or 'cultural texts' in a broad sense, such as political speeches, newspaper articles, books, song lyrics, theatre performances, and even rituals in their discursive aspects. All these discursive performances belong to common discursive spaces which cannot only be analysed linguistically, but also explored as a field open to ethnographic observation and analysis.[4]

In the following the article presents some results from two research projects on Brazilian and German identity respectively. The German part of the project was carried out in the years 1995-1996 in Berlin, the re-emerged capital of unified Germany – which left out further regional differentiation, but offered the possibility for an intensive gaze on the relationship between East- and West-German definitions of belonging (Schneider 2004). By contrast, the

---

[3]   In fact, nationalist rhetorics are always full of fears with regard to cultural change. Nations generally refer to culture (as one of the main ingredients next to history) in their justifications for their claims of sovereignty and independence; in consequence, they feel much more vulnerable than they have historically proven to be. A fine example of this has been the German discussion on the Orthographic Reform introduced in the mid-1990s.

[4]   To apply this type of ethnographic approach to national identity construction is still experimental, in the sense of having few preceding studies to rest upon. The closest model is John Borneman's comparative study on life course narratives and kinship in East and West Berlin across two generations, which, first of all, confirms the great influence of state policies and institutional arrangements on individual self-positioning – even to the degree of being determinant in partner choice and family formation patterns (Borneman 1992). Other particularly relevant ethnographic studies in the field of national identity are Michael Herzfeld's Cultural Intimacy (1997) and the cross-disciplinary approaches to national borders, for example by Hastings Donnan and Thomas Wilson (1999). All these studies discuss/describe identities and borders/boundaries as social phenomena which gain their momentum in becoming meaningful through the interplay of individual self-positioning and narrative strategies with some sort of 'collective' – be it imaginary (such as the 'national community') or face-to-face, as in village communities.

Brazilian part, carried out in 2001-2003, considered regional differences and put a stronger emphasis on 'ethnic diversity'. The ethnographic observation and analysis included mostly 'standard' discursive performances, such as everyday conversations of a wide range of people, political speeches, public discussions, TV programmes, newspaper and magazine articles, but also cultural performances like films, books and theatre. This was complemented by systematic ethnographic fieldwork, e.g. in the editorial board of a newspaper giving insights into the production mechanisms of political and media discourse. All this revealed multifaceted images of representations of German and Brazilian identity respectively in individual as much as collective identification strategies on different levels.

Based on these images, a main 'body of texts' was created in the form of interviews with producers of 'public' discourses in both countries: especially mass media journalists and politicians, but also cultural performers and civil society actors.[5] This group of interviewees can be characterised by a well developed discursive competence, thus it was able – more than others – to reproduce a highly differentiated range of discursive representations. Although the number of interviewees allows no statistical accounts, both interview groups represent a prototypical range of narratives used in public and everyday discourse.[6] The analysis of the interview texts juxtaposes general discursive references, as they were used in the interviews, with individual strategies of positioning, revealing the discursive rules for constructions of belonging in Germany and Brazil.

---

[5]   In the total number of 35 interviews in Germany, women and men, East and West Germans, left- and right-wing representatives of political parties and mass media were almost equally represented. The interview group included some randomly chosen journalists of Berlin-based mass media, but also some distinguished personalities in leading functions of parties or newspapers and some well-known cultural performers, especially writers. In Brazil, regional differences incorporated media and political representatives in Manaus, Belém, São Luís, Fortaleza and Florianópolis, but most of the 23 interviews were held in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Brasília. Rather than a certain political spectrum, the selection of interviews sought to incorporate leading representatives of the main political parties (e.g. members of the Câmara dos Deputados in Brasília), editors and journalists from the most influential mass media, and some particularly relevant institutions (e.g. the Catholic Church, the Armed Forces) and social movements (e.g. favelas, indigenous people and the black/antiracist movement). Again, men and women, and the three spheres were almost evenly distributed in the interview group. Additionally, the interviewees in both countries belong to roughly the same age group, i.e. they were born in the decade 1957 to 1967. This adds a generational dimension to the analysis in the sense of specific socio- and political-historical conditions in which the respondents were raised and socialised, and which exert an influence on many of the positions taken (cf. Schneider 2001a: 127ff., 280ff., 329, 336ff.).

[6]   Prototypes are not typical in the sense of any 'mean statistical value', or to be necessarily the most frequently used, but become meaningful for the analysis through their position in the field and their reference to 'higher orders of discourse'. According to Borneman (1992: 47), they 'illustrate the range of practices rather than the mean, mode, or ideal-typical practice, and (they) reveal the historical and cultural specificity of practices rather than to disclose a set of universal timeless, 'necessary and sufficient' conditions for membership in a category.'

For the analysis, and in order to find out about the basic ingredients and variations, identity construction was operationalised into three fundamental mechanisms:

(a) 'declarations' or 'proclamations' of national belonging;
(b) a justification or argument to explain or support this declaration;
(c) a concept of the internal and external boundaries of this belonging.

Additionally, concepts of identity generally make reference to 'sets of attributes', be they physiological or cultural, which are considered to be 'characteristic' or 'typical'.

In the individual discursive performances of identity construction all four elements played a central role and could easily be extracted from the interview texts. The main analytical objective was to relate the individual narratives and discursive strategies to collective ones, i.e. inter-individually shared contextual and discursive references within the two interview groups in Germany and Brazil respectively.[7]

In the following discussion of the two cases, I will compare some of the master narratives and discursive variations across the two national settings, emphasising two major aspects: (a) the relationship of individual 'declarations of belonging' to the institutional and discursive context of citizenship definitions in both countries, and (b) the role of Othering-principles and notions of cultural diversity. Since the emphasis lies particularly on those features which are not merely individual, personal information about the respondents and authors of the quotes are only given when they are considered to be relevant for the contextualisation.[8]

5. Deutsch sein versus brasilidade

According to the definition proposed above, individual identity constructions start with a 'declaration of belonging'. This refers to what George Devereux called 'identity in its strictly logical sense'. But, declarations of belonging are practically always 'contaminated' by 'an enlarged ascription' (Devereux 1978: 145). So, the use of identity in its pure sense, i.e. someone either is a member of a 'group' or not, goes along with connotations and arguments to explain or justify the declaration of belonging. These connotations and arguments are generally taken from the wider discursive context of the speaker and the situation in

---

[7]   For a more detailed discussion on the discursive analysis of interview texts see Schneider 2002.

[8]   All interview quotes have been translated by the author from Portuguese or German. The names of all interviewees were changed in order to guarantee their anonymity. The numbers in brackets refer to the transcriptions on file with the author. For a complete account of the German research results and methodology see Schneider 2001a. The Brazilian material is still due for publishing.

which the statement is brought forward. Additionally, they allow the speaker to strategically position her/himself in the situation and the wider context.

5.1 Birth and Descent

As a first step, I will confront this type of 'basic references' to national belonging in the interviews from both national settings. In the beginning of each interview, the respondents were asked to perform a 'declaration of belonging' to the respective Nation, and for an argument to support this declaration.

   To begin with, some examples from the Brazilian interviews:

> Do you consider yourself a Brazilian?
> Yes.
> Why?
> [Pause] Because I was born here, and I identify myself with the Brazilians.
> (Maria, 1: 1-4)[9]

> Are you Brazilian?
> I am.
> Why?
> I was born in Brazil. Because I was born here in Brazil.
> (Paula, 2: 9-12)[10]

> You are Brazilian?
> I am Brazilian.
> Why?
> [laughs] Well, I was born in Brazil, obviously, and it is a country which is good to live in, despite all the contradictions we present.
> (Renato, 8:1-4)[11]

> You are Brazilian?
> I am Mineiro. [...]
> Why are you Brazilian?
> Why am I Brazilian...? [laughs] Well, naturally, in the first place be-

---

[9]   'Você se considera brasileira? – Sim. – Por quê? – (Pausa) Porque eu nasci aqui e eu me identifico com os brasileiros.'

[10]   'Você é brasileira? – Sou. – Por quê? – Eu nasci no Brasil. Porque eu nasci aqui no Brasil.'

[11]   'Você é brasileiro? – Sou brasileiro. – Por quê? – (Risos) Bom, eu nasci no Brasil obviamente, é um país bom de se viver, apesar de todas as contradições que a gente apresenta.'

cause I was born here. But, beyond this, because I like our country.
(Alberto, 12: 5-8)[12]

Are you Brazilian?
I am.
Why?
Why I am Brazilian? [laughs] I was born here, that's the only reason.
But I could be American, I could be German, I could be African, I
could be Indian, I could be Australian, I wouldn't have the slightest
problem with that. (João, 10: 41-44)[13]

None of the interviewees questions the place of birth as the main argument
for the self-definition as Brazilian. It is also the only one which seems to be
self-sufficient, i.e. not needing any further elements (see Paula and João).
However, most interviewees sought to add other elements, mostly emphasis-
ing a certain identification with the country and its people. One interviewee
places this notion in the difficult social context (see Renato) – this will play a
role again later in the analysis –, and another uses regional belonging (see
Alberto) as an equivalent to national identity.

As I could observe in numerous situations, regional and local identity in
Brazil is similarly constructed as national belonging – at least with regard to
the rigid use of 'birth' to define belonging. Even persons born in one place,
but raised in another from early childhood on, or having lived in another
place for the most parts of their life, generally name the place of birth as their
identity frame. When in one of the informal conversations we frequently held
I asked an elderly clerk in a dairy shop in Copacabana, whether he was Carioca
(i.e. from Rio de Janeiro), he denied and replied that he was Pernambucano,
from the North-eastern state of Pernambuco. Upon my further inquiry he
revealed that he had lived in Rio for the past 50 years, having arrived at the
age of 19.

Here, belonging is something which is not acquired through time, but
determined through the moment of birth. The fact that during our two-year
stay in Brazil my wife and I were frequently asked whether our little son was
Brazilian – because he might have been born during our stay in the country –
is an indication that descent, the cultural and national background of the
parents, and actual cultural practices (e.g. speaking German better than Por-
tuguese) are not an important enough criterion to outweigh the place of birth.

---

12 'Você é brasileiro? – Mineiro, uai. (risos) – Por que é brasileiro? – Por que eu sou brasileiro… (risos)
Bom, naturalmente, em primeiro lugar porque eu nasci aqui, né. Mas, mais do que isso, porque eu
gosto da nossa terra.'

13 'Você é brasileiro? – Sou. – Por quê? – Por que eu sou brasileiro? (risos) Eu nasci aqui, só por isso.
Mas eu poderia ser americano, eu poderia ser alemão, eu poderia ser africano, eu poderia ser
indiano, eu poderia ser australiano, não teria o menor problema.'

In the German interviews the notion of birth is also very prominent. Again, some examples:

> I am German, on the one side, because I was born here, and on the other, because I was educated here, or socialised and raised. I think that's what makes one being German in the first place, that's nothing that I could decide.
> (Stefan, 10: 9)[14]

> I was born here. As far as I, or my family, can trace back – which is until the 16th century on my mother's side – we have lived in Germany. I would not know, why to not feel as a German.
> (Wolfgang, 26: 63)[15]

> Would you consider yourself a German?
> Yes.
> Why?
> Yes, because I notice that I too have a lot of these attributes in me…
> (Sascha, 4: 9-12)[16]

> Would you consider yourself a German?
> Yes.
> Why?
> Well, because it is part of what I got from my grandparents, whom I would classify as very German, both of them. So…
> (Isa, 5: 8-12)[17]

> Would you consider yourself a German?
> Yes.
> Why?
> [Pause] I actually grew up not being so much German, but rather European. But then I noticed that you lose part of your identity, when you say that you are European. And especially now, the unification has encouraged me to say that I am German.

---

[14] 'Deutscher bin ich zum einen, weil ich hier geboren bin und zum anderen, weil ich hier erzogen wurde bzw. sozialisiert und aufgewachsen. Ich denke mir, dass das in erster Linie das Deutschsein ausmacht und das ist eben auch keine Sache, die irgendwie in meiner Entscheidung stand.'

[15] 'Ich bin hier geboren. Soweit wir oder meine Familie sich zurückverfolgen lässt – das ist auf der mütterlichen Seite bis ins 16. Jahrhundert –, haben wir in Deutschland gelebt. Ich wüsste nicht, warum ich mich nicht als Deutschen empfinden sollte.'

[16] 'Würdest du dich als deutsch bezeichnen? – Ja. – Warum?– Ja, weil ich merke, dass ich auch viele dieser Eigenschaften in mir trage...'

[17] 'Würdest du dich als deutsch bezeichnen? – Ja. – Warum? – Du, ich hab das alles mitbekommen... von meinen Großeltern, die ich als sehr deutsch bezeichne, beide. So...'

Ok. But I was asking not so much for the reasoning why you say that you are German, but for the criteria to say so.
Well, that's not something that you decide, you are or you are not, aren't you? I mean, simply through your birth.
(Monika, 34: 10)[18]

Would you consider yourself a German?
Yes.
Why?
Simply because I am, totally free of emotions. I don't have any problem with that, I have to stand by it. Why should I try to keep the lid closed?
(Nico, 8: 14-17)[19]

Would you consider yourself a German?
I am German because I was born here, ok? If I had been born in England, I would be an Englishman; if I had been born in the Czech Republic, I would be a Czech. Of course, I am a German.
(Jürgen, 5: 20-21)[20]

This last quote is a direct mirror image from João's statement above. Apparently, very similar discursive strategies can be applied in the two national settings, when the aim is to position oneself beyond any sort of nationalist rhetoric.

The other quotes show that the reference to Germanness is discursively heavily contested, there is no 'simple' established discursive notion to recur to. The questions 'Are You German?' or 'Do you consider yourself a German?' were, for example, understood by many of my respondents in Berlin as asking for typical 'Germanness', something which never happened in Brazil. As Isa's and Sascha's quotes above indicate, this is a problematic association

---

[18]   'Würden Sie sich als Deutsche bezeichnen? – Ja. – Warum? – (Pause) Also ich bin eigentlich aufgewachsen damit nicht so sehr Deutsche, sondern Europäerin zu sein. (…) Ich habe aber festgestellt, dass man dadurch, dass man sagt, man ist Europäer, einen Teil der Identität verliert. Und jetzt gerade durch die Vereinigung hat mich das also auch darin bestärkt zu sagen, ich bin Deutsche. – Aha. Aber die Frage zielte jetzt nicht so sehr auf die Begründung, warum Sie das gerne sagen, sondern darauf, was das Kriterium ist, warum Sie Deutsche sind. – Na, das entscheidet man ja nicht, sondern das ist man oder man ist es nicht, oder? Also ich meine, einfach durch die Geburt alleine.'

[19]   'Würdest Du Dich als Deutscher bezeichnen? – Ja. – Warum? – Weil ich's bin, also ganz emotionsfrei. Also, ich hab da keine Probleme mit, ich muss dazu stehen, was soll ich da irgendwie einen Deckel draufhalten?'

[20]   'Würdest du dich als Deutscher bezeichnen? – Ich bin Deutscher, weil ich hier geboren bin, ja? Wenn ich in England geboren wäre, wäre ich Engländer; wenn ich in der Tschechei geboren wäre, wäre ich Tscheche. Ja logisch bin ich Deutscher.'

because being 'typically German' is predominantly connoted negatively in the wider German discursive context (cf. Schneider 2001a: 173ff.).[21]

The most salient commonness between most of the German quotes is the notion of inevitability. While most Brazilian interviewees sought to add an active and positive element (e.g. 'to identify', 'to like'), the German respondents tended to represent their 'Germanness' in rather passive terms, as something to which they 'are subjected' (e.g. 'nothing you decide', 'I would not know why not'). In both settings, birth serves as a main definitional element, but the way the reference to birth is used is very different. Looking at regional belonging, which is far less charged with problematic discursive connotations than national identity, the two following German quotes show that 'birth' lacks the rigidity of its use in Brazil; both interviewees establish an influence of socialisation and biography – not really challenging 'birth', but at least adding a question mark to it:

> Are you a Berliner?
> Not by birth.
> But?
> Well, a quarter of a century has quite an influence. [laughs]
> (Gabriele, 36: 13-16)[22]

> Are you a Berliner?
> Well... spontaneously I would almost say 'yes', although I was born in Hamburg.
> (Stefan, 10: 10-11)[23]

As stated above, there was nothing similar to this uttered in the Brazilian interviews. One explanation for this difference in the use of 'birth' is the possible ambiguity of the term. In the Brazilian interview group 'birth' referred solely to the place of birth, regardless of further circumstances such as the nationality or ethnicity of the parents and the actual duration of the stay at that place. But 'birth' can also involve exactly these circumstances, like e.g. to be born into a certain class, or the descent of parents with specific characteristics and belongings.

---

[21] Connected to this is especially the long-term and ongoing debate about the value of 'German attributes and virtues' after World War II and the Holocaust. Jürgen Habermas and Oskar Lafontaine imprinted on it the classification of German 'secondary virtues' (Sekundärtugenden) as to be held at least partly responsible for making possible concentration camps and the blind following into a disastrous war (cf. Schneider 2001a: 177).

[22] 'Sind Sie Berlinerin? – Gebürtig nicht. – Aber? – Ach ich, ein Vierteljahrhundert prägt doch ungemein (lacht).'

[23] 'Bist Du Berliner? – Uff... ganz spontan würde ich jetzt ja fast 'ja' sagen, obwohl ich in Hamburg geboren bin.'

The Brazilian rigidity of the emphasis on place is directly reflected in the straight-forward ius soli-principle of Brazilian citizenship law, while the German regulations have become increasingly ambiguous being debated extensively in at least the last two decades. The historically central reference to genealogical descent from German ancestry did not only fail to adequately respond to movements of mass immigration and an increasing ethnic diversity of German society. It also is a reminder of the National Socialist past with its 'genealogical extremism'. As a consequence, even conservative interviewees would try to avoid direct references to 'descent' in definitions of their own 'Germanness'.

At the same time, 'discursive alternatives' are not well-established, so even for my discursively well skilled respondents indirect or involuntary references to 'descent' were difficult to avoid. Three examples:

> I have never thought too much about this topic because I never saw the necessity of identifying myself through the nation, as a person. Eh... what is it to be German? Well, I certainly have some character traits which are generally qualified as typically German. That's logical: I am German, my parents were German, my great-grandparents were German, only my great-great-great-grandparents were not German, there is something French in there [laughs].
> (Gabriele, 36: 12)[24]

> Are you German?
> Yes.
> Why?
> [laughs] Because of my German nationality. Well, because I was born in one of the two German states, although my origin, from my parents and grandparents, there is a Polish element in there, because my great-grandmother came from Poland.
> (Karin, 11: 15-18)[25]

---

[24] 'Würden Sie sich denn als Deutsche bezeichnen? – Ich bin Deutsche, ich bin... – Warum? – ...deutsche Staatsbürgerin, das ist der rechtliche Aspekt. Geistig seh ich mich schon wesentlich eher als Europäerin. – Aber würden Sie es tatsächlich nur rechtlich definieren? – Also ich hab mir relativ wenig Gedanken über das Thema gemacht, weil ich irgendwo nie die Notwendigkeit eingesehen habe, mich über die Nation zu identifizieren, als Person. Ähm... was ist es deutsch zu sein? Na gut, mit Sicherheit habe ich Charakterzüge in mir, die als typisch deutsch qualifiziert (...) werden. Das ist logisch: ich bin Deutsche, meine Eltern waren Deutsche, meine Urgroßeltern waren Deutsche, meine Urururgroßeltern waren aber keine Deutschen, da ist irgendwas Welsches drin (lacht).'

[25] 'Bist Du Deutsche? – Ja. – Warum? – (lacht) Weil ich deutscher Nationalität bin. Also weil ich in dem einen der beiden deutschen Staaten geboren bin, wobei mein Ursprung, also meine Eltern und Großeltern, also da hab ich nun gleich 'n polnischen Einschlag, weil meine Urgroßmutter also aus Polen kam.'

Would you consider yourself a German?
Of course.
Why?
I have a German passport, I was born close to Cologne which is in
Germany, my mother stems from a century-old family from the Rhine
River. And my father is from Eastern Prussia. But to that line I some-
how don't have much contact, there... I don't know. [...] I don't have
any feelings to that.
(Sabine, 25: 19-22)[26]

All three respondents are left-wing persons, two of them politicians and one
journalist. Here, the reference to the genealogy of the family serves a double
and somehow contradictory purpose: as an essentialised construction of their
German belonging as something 'inherited', but at the same time – at least in
the first two quotes – also to introduce a non-German element in the geneal-
ogy, as if this would make them 'less German'.

The third example seems to be much closer to the Brazilian responses
above, but it also shows the pitfalls and discursive risks. Within the dominant
discursive framework her 'descent' from an Eastern Prussian father is a le-
gitimate argument for her self-definition as German. But, it is problematic
too, because her father's origin refers to a place which was German only until
the end of World War II – which makes her 'strategic withdrawal' at the end
plausible.

Discursively relevant are also the references to nationality and passport.
This is generally intended to present one's national belonging in rather 'ad-
ministrative terms'. But again, this is a complex issue, since the most impor-
tant legal criterion for defining a person's nationality in Germany is 'genea-
logical descent'. The quotes above show how easily passport and nationality
become discursively connected to one's family history and genealogy – even
despite opposite discursive intentions.

5.2 German and Brazilian 'Others'

The notion of 'genealogical descent' in self-definitions of 'Germanness' sug-
gests similar criteria also for 'non-Germanness', because of the definition of
boundaries to the German Self. 'Racialised' representations of Otherness, in
the sense that skin colour and other physical attributes serve as 'visible identi-
fiers' for non-Germans, are indeed very frequent in everyday- and media
discourse. A foreign name, certain cultural symbols (especially when con-

---

[26] 'Würdest du dich als Deutsche bezeichnen? – Ja klar. – Warum? – Ich hab 'nen deutschen Pass, ich bin
in der Nähe von Köln geboren, das liegt in Deutschland, meine Mutter kommt aus einer jahrhun-
dertealten Familie vom Rhein. Mein Vater kommt aus Ostpreußen. Zu der Linie hab' ich irgend-
wie weniger Kontakt, da... weiß ich auch nicht. (...) Also hab ich überhaupt kein Gefühl zu.'

nected to non-Christian belief), a supposedly 'non-German' language accent, and physical attributes like skin and hair colour or facial traits are used to presuppose either a foreign origin (i.e. being a migrant) or a foreign descent (i.e. being offspring to non-German parents).

This is what especially German-born children of immigrants are generally most upset about: to be constantly asked about their origin and their possible 'Germanness' questioned in more or less subtle ways. In dominant social discourse the most commonly used term Ausländer, originally and legally referring to persons of non-German nationality, has been completely disconnected from citizenship and transformed into a sort of general template for 'non-Germanness'.[27] This template is so hegemonic that even groups, whose German citizenship is theoretically unquestionable, are discursively represented as 'de-nationalised' Others, being 'similar to Ausländer'. This accounts especially for Jews, but occasionally even for East Germans. The most common discursive mechanism of placing Jews outside the German Nation is the rhetorical juxtaposition of 'German-Jewish relations', very frequently found in political and media discourse (see e.g. Spiegel Spezial 2/92).[28]

The 'biological' content of 'Germanness', as described above, has consequences also for general attitudes towards cultural change and diversification. 'German culture' is predominantly understood as something fixed and unchangeable, which is reflected, on the one side, in very frequent references to Prussian ('discipline', 'orderliness') and Romantic ('gravity', 'contemplation') ideals to identify 'typical German' attributes (cf. Schneider 2001a: 174ff.).

On the other side, it produces a particular stance towards the confrontation with 'other' cultures. In a sort of 'literal understanding' of the implied antagonism, own and other culture are interpreted as 'algebraic magnitudes': Cultural influences from outside – be it US-American pop culture or the cultural baggage of immigrants – are threatening, because they may lead to a 'mutual neutralisation' of culture per se. Elements of this static perspective on culture can be found as much in the cultural critique of the left as in conservative discourse worried about the 'decline' of 'Germanness'. The following two extracts come from interviews with a left-wing theatre director and a right-wing publisher:

---

[27] See Forsythe 1989 for a brilliant ethnographic and analytical account of the 'discursive universe' around the term 'Ausländer' as primordial Other to the German Self.

[28] Cf. Forsythe 1989: 148; Schneider 2001a: 251ff.; 2001b; 2003. In an interview short before his death in 1999, Ignatz Bubis, then chairman of the Central Jewish Council in Germany, revealed his great frustration about the fact that throughout his political life he was continuously labelled as an "Israeli, stranger, foreigner, guest" (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 21/9/1998; cf. Schneider 2003: 281). Bubis was offspring of an old Jewish family from Frankfurt who, despite having lost his family in the Shoah, had always insisted on the legitimacy of Jewish life in post-war Germany – especially against opposing claims from Israel.

> The ideal is simply that we learn to accept the Other, the Foreign, and
> to understand it as foreign. [...] Maybe the boundaries (between Own
> and Other; J.S.) should even be enforced because what strikes me
> negatively is this levelling of differences. [...] The danger that I see is a
> society of hodgepodge-culture where all differences are ironed down
> and everything which really defines identity gets lost.
> (Albrecht, 9: 217-33)[29]

> Also some cultural achievements get lost, (like) the ability of a people
> to organise and solve conflicts. That means that one would have to
> start from zero again.
> (Christian, 12: 185)[30]

Hybrid or 'hyphenated identities' (cf. Çağlar 1997), so characteristic for 'tradi-
tional immigration societies' like Brazil, are consequently represented mainly
as a problem, not as a sort of 'added value'. The following quote from the in-
terview with a young conservative politician states particularly clearly how
uncomfortable it appears to him to be 'sitting between the chairs' of two
cultures:

> Well, it's like the young Turks, they don't feel Turkish because they
> were born and raised here, but they do not feel German either. It's a
> sort of in-between thing. [...] Nationality does probably not determine
> all your thoughts and life, but I think there will always be moments in
> which one has to decide: to be part or not? And they don't feel neither
> as one or the other. That's difficult for them, and I am happy that, at
> least, this is something that I can actually decide for myself.
> (Dirk, 22: 131)[31]

This respondent is young enough to have shared his school and university life
in Berlin with students from Turkish background. Differently from what

---

[29] 'Das Ideal ist ganz einfach, dass man das Andere, das Fremde akzeptieren lernt und als Fremdes
auch begreift. (...) Vielleicht müssen die Grenzen noch viel stärker sein. Was mich zum Beispiel
auch unangenehm berührt, ist diese Gleichmacherei (...). Die Gefahr, die ich sehe, ist, dass es eine
Mischmaschkulturgesellschaft gibt, ja? Wo alles nieder- und gleichgebügelt wird und das, was
wirklich Identität ausmachen kann, das geht völlig verloren.'

[30] 'Es geht auch eine kulturelle Leistung abhanden, (nämlich) Konflikte zu organisieren und zu lösen
in einem Volk. Das heißt, man muß im Prinzip dann wieder zum Teil bei Null anfangen.'

[31] 'Also ich kenn das von einigen jungen Türken, die meinten, sie fühlten sich nicht als Türken, weil
sie hier aufgewachsen und geboren sind, aber sie fühlen sich auch nicht als Deutsche. Also das ist
so eine Art Zwischenrolle. (...) Nun ist die Nationalität möglicherweise nicht so ohne weiteres ein
ständiger Faktor im allgemeinen Denken und Leben und sowas, aber ich denke schon, es wird
immer wieder Momente geben, wo es darauf ankommt, daß man einfach mal unterscheiden muß:
ja, ist er nun oder ist er nicht? Und sie fühlen sich halt weder als das eine (noch) als das andere.
Das ist eine Schwierigkeit für die, ich bin froh, daß ich's für mich zumindest entscheiden kann.'

especially older and right wing respondents would presuppose, he knows that many young German-born Turks do actually not really feel Turkish, at least not in juxtaposition to 'Germanness'. But from his perspective, and within the dominant discursive framework of genealogical descent, the idea of 'Turkish Germanness', in the sense of a non-antagonistic, but complementary or 'syncretic' perspective on culture is difficult to conceive. This is not a particular feature of conservatism, although German conservatives are probably particularly sceptical towards cultural hybridisation. But also left-wing and social democratic interviewees find it hard to imagine or to invent a discourse of national belonging which explicitly replaces 'descent' as a definitional criterion by a more open and dynamic notion.

As a consequence of being a nation-state based on massive immigration and of the post-colonial presence of a diverse range of 'colours' and cultural origins, Brazilianness is differently constructed. In official state narratives the diversity of Brazilian culture and society is unanimously praised – as, for example, in the following extract from the official homepage of São Paulo:

> Talking about the State of São Paulo is always using superlatives. It is the state with the major population, the major industrial park, the major economic production, the major register of immigrants and, how could it be different, all the complexity of the most cosmopolitan state in South America.[32]

'Racial miscegenation' and cultural diversity are deeply embedded in Brazilian self-imagination and were consequently not questioned by any of my Brazilian interviewees. In the following, just two examples are given to illustrate the range of acceptance from right to left and across boundaries of 'race' and class. They stem, respectively, from a Teuto-Brazilian conservative and from an activist of a left-wing black and favela-organisation:

> We have our unity in the language, and there is the racial mixture. [...] I think it is very positive because it allows us to adapt to a series of difficulties, combining the virtues of one with the virtues of the other – of course also assimilating some defects...
> (Rolf, 4: 139-41)[33]

---

[32] 'Falar do Estado de São Paulo é sempre no superlativo. É o Estado com a maior população, o maior parque industrial, a maior produção econômica, o maior registro de imigrantes e, como também não poderia deixar de ser, com toda a complexidade do Estado mais cosmopolita da América do Sul.' (http://www.saopaulo.sp.gov.br/saopaulo/index.htm; last access on Dec. 15, 2004)

[33] 'Temos a unidade na língua e temos essa mistura racial. [...] Isso eu acho muito positivo, por isso que nós (permite) nos adaptar a uma série de dificuldades, captando virtudes de um com virtudes de outro – assimilando também alguns defeitos...'

> You can see, for example, in the South of the country, the German
> Nordic feasts, and you can see a feast like the Carimbó in Pará: that's
> very different. There, it is a mixture of blacks, indios, that is very dif-
> ferent, but it is Brazil. The German feast in the South is Brazilian, it is
> in Brazil and Brazilian. I think, it is marvellous, I think Brazil allows
> you this. You see this stuff in the South, the Russians, the Polish, the
> Germans, I think that's marvellous. In São Paulo the oriental Japanese,
> Chinese feasts – that's beautiful, you know? And our traditional mixed
> feasts, the African feasts, the Maracatús, the Congadas, the Samba.
> That's Brazil.
> (João, 10: 142)[34]

The Brazilian emphasis on diversity is obviously far less problematic and
questioned than the German insistence on 'descent'. Therefore discursive
variations within the interview group are rather limited, practically all inter-
viewees use the same basic elements. Nevertheless, Brazilian society is, of
course, not free of internal contradictions with regard to degrees of belong-
ing. Following the theoretical assumptions above, also on the level of national
identity we can expect definitions of external and internal boundaries and of
groups of people considered to be Others to the Brazilian Self. Also in com-
parison with Germany, where the prototypical Other is the Ausländer, i.e.
someone placed beyond the national borders, it is interesting to look for no-
tions of 'In' and 'Out' in a Nation, in which only a very narrow fraction of the
population is 'really autochthonous'.

     Differently from what could probably be expected, I have found very lit-
tle evidence in the interviews (and in public discourse) that these boundaries
would be drawn between, for example, different immigrant communities.
Also anti-Semitism and anti-Islamism seemed not to play a significant role –
which is remarkable considering the fact that my research in Brazil took place
in the immediate global political context of post-9/11. 'Race' and skin colour,
in fact, play a role, and the rhetorical appraisal of 'miscegenation' is contrasted
by the daily experience of discrimination of black or dark skinned persons.
However, racism in Brazil is not 'genealogical', like in the USA (a person is
'black' when s/he has black ancestry), but 'physiological' in the sense that it is
based on the person's actual appearance, independently from the family back-
ground (Marx 1998; Davis 1999). Moreover, and this is one of the major

---

34   'Você vê, por exemplo, no sul do país, né, as festas germânicas nórdicas e você vê uma festa
     como o carimbó no Pará: é muito diferente. Tem aquela coisa de misturar os negros, os índios,
     então é muito diferente, mas é Brasil. Uma festa germânica no sul do país é brasileira, tá no Brasil
     é brasileira. Eu acho maravilhoso, eu acho que o Brasil te permite isso. Você vê aquelas coisas no
     sul, os russos, os poloneses, os alemães, eu acho maravilhoso. Em São Paulo as festas orientais,
     japonesas, chinesas – pô isso é lindo, entendeu? Fora as nossas festas tradicionais misturadas, as
     festas africanas, os maracatús, os congados, o samba. Isso é o Brasil.'

points of discussion in Brazil, racism is closely intertwined with the question of social class.[35]

There is a telling grammatical difference between German and Brazilian references to their respective countries: in German, the word Deutschland does not seem to have a plural – despite the fact, that there had been two Germanys for more than 40 years. Both possible forms, Deutschländer and Deutschlands, sound somehow strange and unfamiliar. In contrast, the plural of Brazil – Brasis – is very common at least in political and literary discourse. A search in the electronic catalogue of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro brought up no less than thirteen bibliographical references mentioning the term even in their title. It was also quite present in the interviews:

> We are a very big country, thus, in fact, there are various Brazils inside Brazil, there are various cultures. For example, here in the Northeast, we have a people that is more affected by the history of droughts, and where the politicians have been in power for years and years just because of the ignorance of this people. [...] So, it's various Brazils inside one single gigantic country, maybe that makes it a little bit more difficult.
> (Renato, 8: 124)[36]

> Now, speaking about the Brazilian culture means speaking about two Brazils. One Brazil more left behind and another Brazil more developed. [Later in the interview:] There are many Brazils, that's why this country is so difficult to understand. That's why it is a difficult country, isn't it? There is a lot to study for you anthropologists here!
> (Waldir, 9: 8, 238)[37]

---

[35]   Dominant middle class perceptions of social difference are deeply racialised by using skin colour as the main indicator for class (see Cunha 2002 for a highly interesting historical and ethnographic exploration of the construction of difference according to skin colour in the police arquives of Rio de Janeiro). Other particularly relevant recent accounts within the abundant literature on 'race' and 'class' in Brazil include Folha de São Paulo/Datafolha 1998; Maggie & Rezende 2001; Maio & Santos 1996; O'Dougherty 1998; Reichmann 1999; Sodré 1999.

[36]   'A gente é um país muito gigante, então, na verdade, nós temos vários Brasis dentro do Brasil, são várias culturas, por exemplo, aqui no Nordeste, nós temos um povo que foi mais sacrificado por um histórico de seca, onde os políticos, justamente pela ignorância dessa população, (...) estiveram no poder ao longo de anos e anos e anos. (...) Então são vários Brasis dentro de um só país gigante, isso talvez dificulte um pouco.'

[37]   'Agora, falar de cultura brasileira é falar de dois Brasis, ne? Um Brasil mais atrasado, um Brasil mais desenvolvido. (e mais tarde na entrevista:) Tem muitos Brasis, são muitos Brasis, por isso que é difícil entender esse país. Isso é porque esse país é difícil, não é? Tem muito que se estudar para vocês antropólogos!'

> Brazil consists of various Brazils, here in Glória there is one Brazil,
> Vigário Geral is another Brazil, Barra da Tijuca is yet another which is
> not the same as Glória, which is not the same as Vigário Geral. And
> the Northeast is yet another.
> (João, 10: 56)[38]

> It's a so highly differentiated process of economic, cultural, and social
> development, that you have no idea of how many realities, how many
> layers of economic and social reality there are in this country. How
> many Brazils do exist here? That's the reason that I am speaking of a
> fragmented identity.
> (Beth, 11: 4)[39]

As the quotes show, the expression refers, on one side, to cultural diversity, especially with regard to regional differences, for example, between the 'old colonial' Northeast and the 'new immigrant' South/Southeast. On the other – and this is probably its main discursive function – it highlights the deep social divide in Brazilian society.

The term Brasis discursively induces the idea of various and different forms of 'Brazilianness' – which also invites for constructions of Otherness along the boundaries between these 'Brazils'. In fact, the interviews and the analysis of public discourse did bring forward a less homogeneous picture than Othering-mechanisms in the German case. Yet, public discourse in Brazil is very much dominated by mass media and political circles of (upper) middle class origin in the Southeast and particularly in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Consequently, there are a number of discursive features and elements from this perspective that have entered general constructions of 'Brazilianness'.

Especially interesting from this perspective are those terms where both interpretations of the boundaries between these 'Brazils' merge, as is the case of the nordestinos, the labour migrants from the Northeast to the Southeast and South. In the national imagery of Brazil the Northeast symbolises the colonial origins of the country and its main folkloristic treasures. But Northeasterners also represent the phenomenon of 'migração' (migration), i.e. thousands of

---

[38] 'O Brasil tem vários brasis, aqui na Glória é um Brasil, Vigário Geral é outro Brasil, Barra da
Tijuca é um outro, que não é igual a Glória, que não é igual a Vigário, o Nordeste é um outro.'
(Glória is a mixed inner-city neighbourhood in Rio de Janeiro, Vigário Geral one of the most vio-
lent and notorious favelas, and Barra da Tijuca a newly built, Miami-inspired upper middle class
area along the longest beach in the city.)

[39] 'É um processo tão diferenciado de desenvolvimento econômico, cultural, social que você não
tem idéia de quantas realidades, de quantas camadas de realidades econômicas e sociais existem
nesse país. Quantos brasis existem aqui. Por isso que eu falo de uma identidade fragmentada.'

internal temporary or permanent migrants, contributing greatly to the rapid growth of the major cities' outskirts and the precarious underclasses.

The following commentary, published in the prestigious liberal newspaper Folha de São Paulo, expresses in an exceptionally pointed manner the 'functional similarity' between nordestinos in Brazil, and Turks in Germany or Maghrebinians in France. The article actually comments on identity problems among descendants of Arab immigrants in France and their supposed susceptibility to Islamic fundamentalism. At the end, the author arrives at the following conclusion:

> A mere French problem? No. There are the Turks in Germany, other Arabs or Muslims or Africans in other European countries, Latinos in the USA, and even Northeasterners in São Paulo. [...]. Like the honey of El Dorado does not flow for everyone, one or the other will always tend to see in the Osama bin Laden-way a solution, and not a problem. (Clóvis Rossi, Folha de São Paulo, 18/10/2001)[40]

The term nordestinos is part of a semantic field which includes migração, but also favelas (slums) because that is where nordestinos mostly live when they come to the bigger cities. In the following some quotes from the interviews:

> Spontaneously: what do you think of when 'favela' is mentioned?
> Immigration.
> Immigration? How so?
> Immigration from the North, from the Northeast. The favelas were created only for this, they were created because of the North and the Northeast. When you go up the Rocinha (one of Rio de Janeiro's largest and best-known favelas; J.S.), you will see, who's living there? It's the Paraíbas[41]. This is really an immigration problem which was not solved, [...] the region there was not developed which made them come here, to the big cities to be able to work and to make a living. (Claudia, 3: 399-402)[42]

---

[40] Um problema puramente francês? Não. Há os turcos na Alemanha, outros árabes ou muçulmanos ou africanos em outros países europeus, latinos nos Estados Unidos e, até, nordestinos em São Paulo. (...) Como o mel de Eldorado não jorra para todos, um ou outro sempre tenderá a pensar na forma Osama Bin Laden de ser como uma solução, não um problema.'

[41] Paraíbas come from the North-eastern state of Paraíba, but it is also a contemptuous generic term for Northeasterners in general.

[42] 'Espontaneamente: em que pensa quando se fala de "favela"? – Imigração. – Imigração? – Como? – Imigração do Norte, do Nordeste, as favelas só foram criadas por isso, elas foram criadas por causa do Norte e Nordeste. Quando você sobe a Rocinha você vai ver, quens são lá? São os paraíbas. Este é um problema realmente de imigração que não foi resolvido, (...) não foi

Does Rio have a problem of immigration?
A big one, Rio de Janeiro is Northeastern, very Northeastern too. I am
a son of Northeasterners.
The favelados are Northeasterners?
And blacks. […] You can see here in the street, all porters are North-
easterners. Go to the beach in Copacabana, almost all the waiters are
Northeasterners, and they do not live in a favela.
So there is a strong correlation between the favela and the Northeast?
No, the favela is a Northeastern diaspora, the favela as such was cre-
ated by Northeasterners… […] Rio de Janeiro is a Black and North-
eastern diaspora.
(João, 10: 175-83)[43]

The rural exodus here in Brazil is impressive, the cities double their
population within a few years only. [...] It's as if these persons are liter-
ally thrown into the peripheries. And there is the origin of all the prob-
lems of violence which exist, see?
Which you have in Brasilia as well?
In Brasilia too, sure.
(Alberto, 12: 26-28)[44]

There is a close discursive connection between nordestinos (and the migration
from the Northeast), the favela and 'violence'. Rossi's discursive association
between Islamic terrorism and nordestinos seems extreme, but it is part of a
widely accepted 'social paranoia' among members of the (upper) middle class,
which interprets the regular waves of criminality and violence literally in terms
of 'warfare' and 'terrorism'. It is very common in the press to draw analogies
to war-situations like Bosnia, Palestine or Iraq, for example by comparing a
gunfight in the streets of Copacabana with the so-called 'Snipers Alley' in
Sarajevo. At the height of the US-invasion of Iraq in March 2003, the main
liberal newspaper of Rio de Janeiro O Globo used to directly confront pages
entitled 'The War of Bush' with pages using the overall header of 'The War in
Rio', referring to rises in crime rates, but especially to armed disputes between

---

desenvolvido lá, que fez com que eles viessem, procurar as cidades grandes, né, para poder
trabalhar e viver.'

[43]   'O Rio tem um problema de imigração? – Muito, o Rio de Janeiro é nordestino, muito nordestino
também. Eu sou filho de nordestinos. – Os favelados são nordestinos? – E negros. (...) Você vê assim
... dessa rua aqui, só essa calçada, todos os porteiros são nordestinos. Anda pela orla de
Copacabana, quase todos os garçons são nordestinos e não moram em favela. – Então isso, tem uma
correlação direta entre a favela e o Nordeste? – Não, a favela é uma diáspora nordestina, a própria favela
foi criada por nordestinos ... (...) o Rio de Janeiro é uma diáspora negra e nordestina.'

[44]   'Esse êxodo rural aqui no Brasil é impressionante, as cidades dobram a população em poucos
anos. (...) Essas pessoas vão sendo literalmente jogadas para as periferias. E daí todo o problema
de violência que existe, né. – Que tem aqui em Brasília também? – Em Brasília tem também, tem
também.'

different groups of drug-mafias. In fact, by far most of these conflicts occur in the favelas, and it is their inhabitants which suffer most of the violent deaths which are regularly inflating Brazilian crime statistics to unparalleled rates.

'Violence' and 'war' are discursive counter-images to 'peace', which appears to be an important element in Brazilian self-representations. The connection between 'Brazilianness' and 'peace' on the one hand, and 'war' and 'violence', on the other, is explicit in the following interview quote from a leading TV journalist at Rede Globo:

> I think that Brazil is a peaceful country, the Brazilian is peaceful, isn't he? Now, if you look at Rio de Janeiro: can you live in peace here? No, you can't because of the violence. But the Rio citizen is peaceful. Is he not? If there is to form a demonstration of white flags, he is there. He goes into the streets to demonstrate etc. [...]
> Is it part of Brazilian identity to be peaceful, to love peace?
> I think so, I think so. [...] I think that the Brazilian feels a rejection to war, a rejection to fight, a rejection to conflict. You can see that the Brazilian is peaceful. The Brazilian is a peaceful citizen.
> (Luca, 22: 247-253)[45]

The situational context in which the interviewee started to talk about 'peace' were new images of a suicide bomb attack in Israel on the TV set on his desk. The discursive connection to the situation of violence in Brazil is very short, as is the use of white flags and clothes in demonstrations as much against George Bush as against the violence in Rio.

When touching the context of 'migração', the discourse on favelas shows a number of interesting parallels to the German discussion on immigration, from the metaphor of a 'flood' – representing not only a social (or cultural), but also an 'ecological' threat (cf. Schneider 2001a: 333) – to the conviction that 'these people' could be helped better in their places of origin. These elements are presumably part of a global language which has developed in the context of recent mass migration. But parallels can also be found on 'the reverse side of the medal': favelados and Turks are both agents of cultural change in the respective major cities of the two countries; changes which are perceived as threatening by some, but also seen as dynamic cultural innovation by others. Turkish filmmakers, comedians, and writers in Germany (cf.

---

45   'Eu acho que o Brasil, ele é um país pacífico, o brasileiro é pacífico, né? Agora, você pega a cidade, pega o Rio de Janeiro, dá para dizer que vive em paz? Não dá para viver em paz, por causa da violência. Agora, o cidadão carioca é pacífico. Não é? Se precisar ir fazer movimento de bandeira branca, ele vai. Ele vai para rua, se manifesta e tal. (...) – É parte da identidade brasileira de ser pacífico, de amar a paz?– Eu acho, eu acho. (...) Eu acho que o brasileiro tem uma rejeição à guerra, rejeição à briga, rejeição ao conflito, né. Você ve que o brasileiro é pacífico, o brasileiro. Um cidadão pacífico.'

Schneider 2001b) would find their Brazilian parallel in favela-based Hip-hop bands, theatre groups, and fashion labels.[46]

Yet, there is still one major difference between the discourses on Turks or Ausländer and favelados. While the first are unambiguously represented as non-Germans, favelados in general and nordestinos in particular are both closely associated also with some of the most important cultural ingredients of Brazilian identity: e.g. samba, carnival and football in the case of the urban poor (cf. Vianna 1995), and Brazil's pre-modern rural traditions and folk heritage in the Northeastern countryside, the Sertão.[47] The favela is actually, and maybe ironically, a highly romantic place: The structure of the houses and the small streets and stairs remind of small (colonial) villages. Here, solidarity and close social bonds within the community seem still alive – quite different from the anonymity of middle class residential blocks or, worse, apartment towers. The favela could be an ideal place for children to play in the streets and to be away from traffic noises – if the deadly danger of the so-called 'lost bullets', ricochets from the war between drug gangs and the police, would not exist.

The favela is thus simultaneously the primary Other to Brazilian middle class identity and a projection foil of images of prototypical 'Brazilianness'. This is not an unusual contradiction, but it shows that Brazilian identity construction is more concerned about different forms of 'Brazilianness' than clear depictions of In and Out. This hypothesis is strengthened by another discursive element found in the interviews: the literal understanding of the term 'middle class'. As it suggests, there is not only a lower boundary to the poor and marginalised, but also an upper boundary to the extreme rich and powerful. This group is widely referred to as 'the Brazilian elite'. Two examples:

> The Brazilian elite is one of the worst elites in human history, but, on the other hand, it is very efficient in all the techniques of illicit enrichment [...], the genius for robbing of this elite is incomparable in the world. [...] They are Brazilians, but they have number accounts in Switzerland, they are always over there, they are cosmopolitans, they all speak several languages, they know the whole world, they know the arts, they are gourmets and frequent travellers. So, they represent one of the most metropolitan elites that exists. [...] They don't know Brazil, and they don't want to know [...], they have no sense for the nation. [...] When the country drowns tomorrow, they are off, that's why São Paulo is the second biggest market for helicopters in the world.

---

[46] Cf. <http://www.vivafavela.com.br> (last access on Sept. 12, 2006). See also Valladares & Medeiros (2003) for an overview on academic publications on the phenomenon of the favelas.

[47] Cf. the central importance of Gilberto Freyre's book Casa Grande & Senzala on this colonial world, an ever-lasting best-seller in Brazilian bookstores (Freyre 2001). It was originally published in 1933.

> But with helicopters you don't get out of the country...
> But you go directly to the airport to take a plane. [laughs]
> (Gilberto, 6: 214-226)[48]

> The economic, financial, industrial elite, [...] which has houses in
> Monaco, houses in Miami, houses in New York, apartments in Paris,
> they live the great international jet-set. [...] It's logical that they are the
> product of a completely different reality than the Brazilian reality.
> They are not part of our Brazilian reality.
> (Paulo, 14: 44)[49]

Without any doubt Brazil has a special class of super-rich and extremely pow-
erful families which have ruled the country since its colonial origins. The
second interviewee, a member of the federal parliament and former minister,
actually comes from such a family with very strong political influence and a
solid power base in one of the federal states in the Northeast. The fact that he
does apparently not identify himself as part of the 'Brazilian elite' indicates
that – at least in identity terms – it can be seen as a rather 'imagined' group.
But from the point of view of the middle class, which represents the 'gravita-
tional centre' of Brazilian identity, it has an important discursive function: Its
representation as internationally educated and polyglot, not showing any spe-
cial affection to Brazil, is the very opposite to the 'primordial Brazilianness' of
the favela and the Northeast. In this sense, Brazilian middle-class identity ap-
pears to be well located between the 'non-Brazilianness' of the elite and the
'wrong' (because connoted with violent) 'Brazilianness' of migrants and fave-
lados.

Conclusion

Ernest Renan's metaphor of national identity as a plébiscite de tous les jours
(1992: 54) is certainly one of the most beautiful bonmots in Nation Theory, yet

---

[48]   'A elite do Brasil é uma das piores elites da história da humanidade, mas pelo outro lado ela é
eficiente em todas as técnicas de enriquecimento ilícito, (...) a ingenhosidade dessa elite para
roubar é sem igual no mundo. (...) São brasileiros, mas têm as contas numeradas na Suíça (risos),
estão sempre lá, eles são cosmopolitas, todos eles falam várias línguas, conhecem o mundo
inteiro, conhecem arte, são gourmets, são viajados, então, é uma das elites mais metropolitanas
que existe. (...). Eles não conhecem o Brasil, nem querem saber (...), ela não tem o sentido da
nação. (...) Se o país vai fundar amanhã, ela está fora, por isso que São Paulo tem o segundo
mercado de helicópteros do mundo. – Mas com helicóptero não se sai fora do país... – Mas sai direto
para o aeroporto para pegar o avião (RISOS)'

[49]   'A elite econômica, financeira, industrial são, (...) que tem casas em Mônaco, casas em Miami,
casas em Nova Iorque, apartamentos em Paris, relações, vivem o grande jet-set internacional. (...)
É lógico que elas são produto de uma realidade completamente diferente da realidade brasileira.
Portanto, eles não estão dentro da nossa realidade brasileira.'

it has a major theoretical flaw. If national identity would really be subject to a regular examination of either its 'ethnographic contents' or the actual individual 'desires' to form a nation – as the expression suggests – national communities would hardly have a chance to survive. Nations have been practically immune to doubts in themselves, regardless the amount of internal differences and contradictions. The ethnographic material above shows that even blatant contradictions – like the degree of violence in a supposedly 'peace-loving society', or the inability to imagine 'Germanness' as something related to the empirical cultural realities – do not question dominant mechanisms in national identity construction.

Identity constructions are always highly selective in taking certain features and elements as the basis for self-definition. Limiting significantly the number of relevant criteria allows not only to bridge regional differences and the factual heterogeneity of cultural and social practices, but also guarantees continuity over time, despite demographic, social and cultural changes. Ethnographically observable contradictions are presumably inherent to any identity construction and community imagination (cf. Macdonnell 1986: 39f.) because that is what identity is about. Obviously, the defining criteria and their relation to cultural and social practices are frequently subject to discussion also within the national communities at stake. In fact, Brazil and Germany are particularly fine examples for how these contradictions have stimulated much of the intellectual and political debate over many decades.

Methodologically, the 'discursivity' of identity constructions provides a direct analytical access to its basic formational principles because discourse and textual analysis can serve as well proven tools in the empirical search for 'master narratives' (Borneman) and 'discursive formations' (Foucault). Rather than running the risk of taking national identity as a pseudo-ontological 'social fact', the analysis should therefore concentrate on the processes and mechanisms of national community imagination. And here, Brazil and Germany represent two highly interesting cases – especially when contrasted.

References

Anderson, Benedict (1991): Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism. New York: Verso.

Barth, Fredrik (ed.) (1969): Ethnic groups and boundaries: The social organization of culture difference. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

--- (2000): Boundaries and connections, in: Cohen, Anthony P. (ed.): Signifying identities: Anthropological perspectives on boundaries and contested values. London: Routledge, pp. 17-36.

Borneman, John (1992): Belonging in the two Berlins: Kin, state, nation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bryant, Christopher G.A. (1997): Citizenship, national identity and the accommodation of difference: Reflections on the German, French, Dutch and British cases, in: New Community, No. 2, 23rd Vol., pp. 157-72.

Çağlar, Ayşe (1997): Hyphenated identities and the limits of 'culture', in: Modood, Tariq/ Werbner, Pnina (eds.): The politics of multiculturalism in the New Europe. London: Zed, pp. 169-185.

Cohen, Anthony P. (1994): Self consciousness: An alternative anthropology of identity. London/New York: Routledge.

Craig, Gordon A. (1982): Über die Deutschen. München: Beck.

Cunha, Olívia Maria Gomes da (2002): Intenção e Gesto: Pessoa, cor e a produção cotidiana de (in)diferença no Rio de Janeiro, 1927-1942. Rio de Janeiro: Arquivo Nacional.

Davis, Darién J. (1999): Avoiding the dark: Race and the forging of national culture in modern Brazil. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Devereux, George (1978): Ethnopsychoanalysis: Psychoanalysis and anthropology as complementary frames of reference. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Donnan, Hastings/ Wilson, Thomas (1999): Borders: Frontiers of identity, nation and state. Oxford: Berg.

Fensterseifer-Woortmann, Ellen (2001): Lembranças e esquecimentos: memórias de teuto-brasileiros, in: Leibing, Annette/ Benninghoff-Lühl, Sibylle (eds.): Devorando o tempo: Brasil, o país sem memória. São Paulo: Mandarim, pp. 205-235.

Freyre, Gilberto (43 2001): Casa Grande & Senzala. Rio de Janeiro: Record.

Folha de São Paulo/ Datafolha (1998): Racismo cordial: A mais completa análise sobre o preconceito de cor no Brasil. São Paulo: Ática.

Forsythe, Diana (1989): German identity and the problem of history, in: Tonkin, Elizabeth/ McDonald, Maryon / Chapman, Malcolm (eds.): Ethnicity and history. London: Routledge, pp. 137-156.

Foucault, Michel (1994): Archäologie des Wissens. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Gellner, Ernest (1983): Nations and nationalism. Oxford: Blackwell.

Herzfeld, Michael (1997): Cultural intimacy: Social poetics in the nation-state. London: Routledge.

Hobsbawm, Eric J. (1990): Nations and nationalism since 1780: Programme, myth, reality. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

--- / Ranger, Terence (eds.) (1983): The invention of tradition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Leite, Dante M. (1976): O caráter nacional Brasileiro: História de uma ideologia. São Paulo: Pioneira.

Lesser, Jeffrey (1999): Negotiating national identity. Immigrants, minorities, and the struggle for national identity in Brazil. Durham: Duke University Press.

Macdonnell, Diane (1986): Theories of discourse: An introduction. Oxford: Blackwell.

Maggie, Yvonne/ Claudia Barcellos Rezende (eds.) (2001): Raça como retórica: a construção da diferença. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira.

Maio, Marcos Chor/ Ventura Santos, Ricardo (eds.) (1996): Raça, ciência e sociedade. Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Fiocruz/CCBB.

Marx, Anthony W. (1998): Making race and nation: A comparison of South Africa, the United States, and Brazil. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

O'Dougherty, Maureen (1998): Auto-retratos da classe média: Hierarquias de 'cultura' e consumo em São Paulo, in: Dados [online], No. 2, 41st Vol. [cited 15 May 2003], pp. 411-44.

Reichmann, Rebecca (ed.) (1999): Race in contemporary Brazil: From indifference to inequality. University Park: Pennsylvania University Press.

Renan, Ernest (1992): Qu'est-ce qu'une nation? Paris: Presses Pocket.

Schneider, Jens (2001a): Deutsch sein: Das Eigene, das Fremde und die Vergangenheit im Selbstbild des vereinten Deutschland. Frankfurt am Main: Campus.

--- (2001b): Talking German: Othering strategies in public and everyday discourses, in: Gazette, No. 4, 63rd Vol., pp. 351-63.

--- (2002): Vom Persönlichen zum Allgemeinen: Diskursivität und Repräsentativität in Interviews, in: Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung (FQS), No. 3, 3rd Vol., in: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs/fqs.htm> (20.1.2005).

--- (2003): Normal deutsch? Die NS-Vergangenheit im Selbstverständnis als Deutsche nach 1989, in: Almgren, Birgitta/ Kirsch, Frank-Michael (eds.): Sprache und Politik im skandinavischen und deutschen Kontext 1933-1945. Aalborg: Universitetsforlag, pp. 263-85.

--- (2004): Mutual othering: East and West Berliners happily divided? In: Costabile-Heming, Carol Anne / Halverson, Rachel J./ Foell, Kristie (eds.): Berlin: The symphony continues. Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, pp. 165-85.

Seton-Watson, Hugh (1977): Nations and states: An inquiry into the origins of nations and the politics of nationalism. London: Methuen.

Seyferth, Giralda (1990): Imigração e cultura no Brasil. Brasília: Editora UnB.

--- (1998): German immigration and the formation of German-Brazilian ethnicity, in: Anthropological Journal on European Cultures, No. 2, 7th Vol., pp. 131-54.

Skidmore, Thomas E. (²1993): Black into White: Race and nationality in Brazilian thought. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sodré, Muniz (1999): Claros e Escuros: Identidade, povo e mídia no Brasil. Petrópolis/Rio de Janeiro: Vozes.

Soysal, Yasemin (1994): Limits of citizenship: Migrants and postnational membership in Europe. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Valladares, Licia/ Lidia Medeiros (2003): Pensando as favelas do Rio de Janeiro, 1906-2000: Uma bibliografia analítica. Rio de Janeiro: Relume Dumará & FAPERJ.

Vianna, Hermano (1999): The mystery of samba: Popular music and national identity in Brazil. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.