

TALKING ANTHROPOLOGY: Bewegte Wissenschaft im Gespräch

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Department of Social & Cultural Anthropology (4. floor), Übungsraum

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Representational Spaces: The Indigenous Lands Demarcation Process in Venezuela

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The indigenous struggle for territorial rights in Venezuela is not new, although in recent years such notion is presented. I will sketch a general outline of the current situation for land demarcation and entitlement, presenting some specific cases I know first-hand: the Mapoyo, the Yukpa, and the Kari'ña indigenous peoples. I will make an introduction to the laws implemented in the last decade, but I will also make a historical analysis of the land entitlement process, which can be dated to the early colonial period. I aim to a revision of the given forms and ways of representation (mainly how authorities handle indigenous issues, including identity topics): what is recognized as autochthonous or native – as indigenous. Therefore, what is recognized and what is not acknowledged, and beyond this discussion, how these representations have an impact on indigenous worlds. For this, I will use as a window or vantage point the cartographic representations produced both since colonial times up to our days, about indigenous lands.

In recent Venezuelan history, there are important legal figures that provide a great opportunity to indigenous peoples for their territorial struggles. In practice, this is a different case. In a large portion of Venezuelan territory, there are indigenous populations. By means of juridical instruments, they demand the entitlement of great territorial extensions. The Venezuelan State faces these demands with reluctance and fear. The State that conceded and intended to protect indigenous rights over lands, is the very same State restricting and aborting the processes of legal and identity claims and assertions – processes where land posits and grounds indigenous socio-cultural reproduction.

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