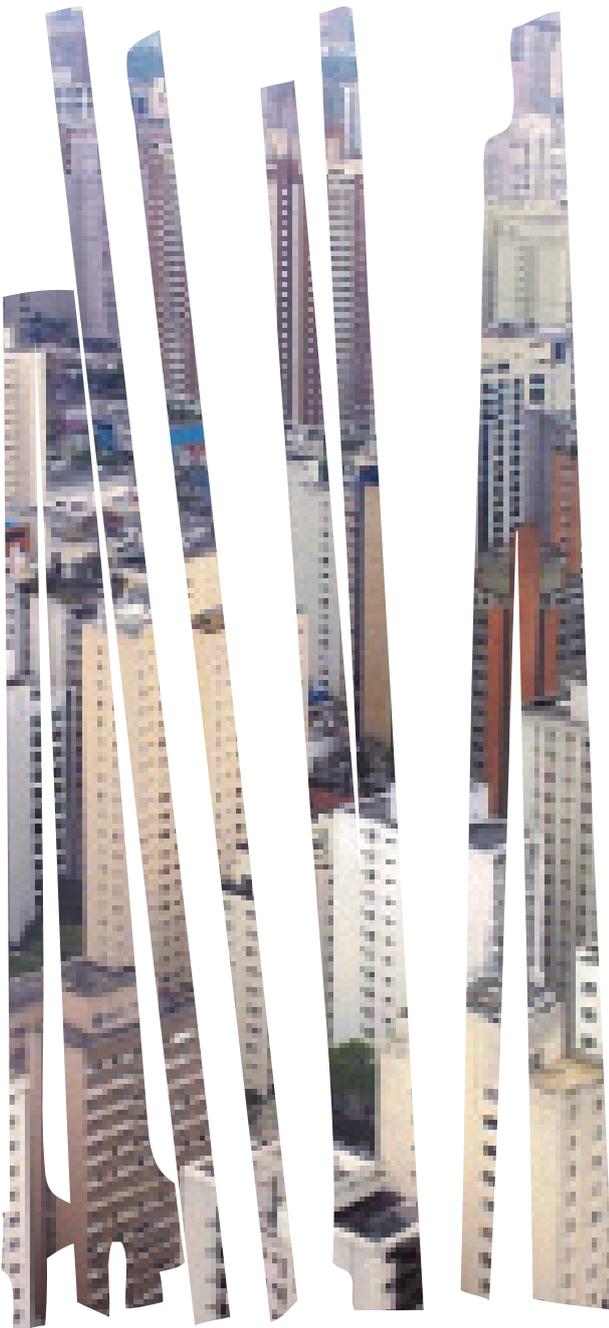


**Working Paper, No. 9, 2011**

**Researching Entangled Inequalities in  
Latin America**

The Role of Historical, Social, and  
Transregional Interdependencies

Sérgio Costa



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Costa, Sérgio 2011: „Researching Entangled Inequalities in Latin America. The Role of Historical, Social and Transregional Inequalities“, **desiguALdades.net** Working Paper Series, No. 9, Berlin; **desiguALdades.net** Research Network on Interdependent Inequalities in Latin America.

The paper is a revised version of the paper presented by Sérgio Costa at the the Conference “Interdependencies of Social Categorisations. Second International Symposium of the Research Network for Latin America”, University of Cologne, September 12-14, 2011, sponsored by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

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## Researching Entangled Inequalities in Latin America

### The Role of Historical, Social, and Transregional Interdependencies

Sérgio Costa

#### **Abstract**

Social inequalities have conventionally been researched as synchronous processes within the frame of national borders and articulated in the concept of class. This means that established scholarship has not adequately considered the historical dimensions and global entanglements or interconnections between class and other social classifications that have shaped existing inequalities. Starting from world system and postcolonial theories as well as from recent debates on transnationalism, the paper first presents a set of resources for overcoming current deficits in the research of inequalities. In order to illustrate how these resources analytically operate, the second part of the paper discusses the case of social inequalities which affect Afro-descendants in Latin America.

**Keywords:** Entangled Inequalities | Ascriptions | Afro-descendants in Latin America

#### **Biographical Notes**

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## Introduction

Social inequalities have conventionally been researched as synchronous processes within the frame of national borders and articulated in the concept of class. This means that established scholarship has not adequately considered the historical dimensions and global entanglements or interconnections between class and other social classifications that have shaped existing inequalities.

A number of recent contributions tries to correct these analytical deficits from different perspectives. In order to overcome methodological nationalism, a first group of contributions has focused on articulations of national and global structures of inequalities showing how inequalities correspond to entanglements between social processes at different geographical levels: local, national, global.

A second group of contributions has investigated the relationship between different axes of stratification, focusing on how social inequalities emerge at the intersections between different social ascriptions, particularly race, class, gender, and ethnicity. This paper presents a brief balance of the debates in both fields as well as a set of resources for overcoming current deficits of the research on interdependent inequalities. In order to illustrate how some of these resources analytically operate, the second half of the paper discusses the case of social inequalities which affect Afro-Descendants in Latin America.

### 1. Social Inequalities and Interdependencies

The state of the art of Latin American research on interdependencies between inequalities observed in different world regions and on relations between different axes of social stratification varies. In fact, the research on the latter has over the years already led to an accumulation of important findings. In contrast, research on entanglements between structures of inequality in different regions is less developed. This field has an important precursor in dependency theory (Cardoso/Falleto 1969). Since the 1980s, however, the research on inequality in Latin America has been increasingly dominated by econometric approaches which have served to direct the analytical focus toward a nation-state-centric perspective.

In the following section, I present a cursory overview of both areas that reflects their varying states of academic research. Correspondingly, the remarks on the interdependencies between the diverse axes of stratification will focus on the discussion in and on Latin America. The interdependencies between different regions, however, are placed in a larger international context.

## 1.1 Axes of Stratification: Class, Race, Gender, and Ethnicity

In Latin America, research on the links between race, ethnicity, and class has been carried out since the 1930s. The works by U.S. American sociologists on race relations in Brazil are particularly noteworthy. The first systematic study can be accredited to the doctoral thesis of Donald Pierson, a scholar of the Chicago School, who carried out his field research in Salvador, in the Brazilian state of Bahia, between 1935 and 1937. Pierson (1942) concluded that the inequalities he observed could best be understood by focusing on the category of class. The question of racial discrimination was referred to as an afterthought, that is, as an individual 'deformation' without sociological relevance.

In light of this partiality, Pierson's study elaborates on the overarching question of the differences between caste and class. He was primarily concerned with demonstrating that social inequalities in Brazil are not reproduced by a rigid caste system based on 'skin colour,' but that Brazil had succeeded rather in setting up a multi-racial class society in which upward social mobility was possible despite racist ascriptions.

Years later, Charles Wagley (1952: 148f.) corroborated Pierson's conclusions with regard to the disappearance of racial castes, but not without adding the following remark:

With rare exceptions, the people of the upper class of Brazil are Caucasian in physical appearance [...]. The criterion of race becomes most crucial in determining social position.

Marvin Harris (1956) built on this point of view concluding that in his research region, Minas Velhas, also located in Bahia, the assumed skills and talents of the population under study could be placed on a scale according to the category of 'skin colour': the 'whiter' an individual was categorized the more likely positive skills and talents were attributed to her or him. Harris identified two fundamental aspects.

Firstly, he found that the racializing categories associated with skin colour should be placed on a gradual scale, rather than consisting of two binary poles between groups of white and black classified according to ascendancy. For Harris, such a gradual scale had enormous importance since it defined phenotypical characteristics in such a way that not only whites but also blacks could use the scale to claim superiority over others who were categorized as darker. Secondly, Harris refers to the lack of a simple and immediate overlap of the categories of race and class. That is, despite the significance of physical traits for building social ascriptions, and thus an individual

or group's social position, this aspect competes with other factors even though such physical characteristics are never fully neutralised on the scale. Nevertheless, they are given more or less weight depending on the situation of a certain individual with regard to the other factors that are seemingly relevant in existing classifications:

There is no status-role for the Negro as a Negro, nor for the white as white, except in the ideal culture. Race is but one of several criteria, which will determine how the mass of other individuals will actually behave toward him. In other words, wealth, occupation, and education, the other three major ranking principles, have to a certain extent the power of defining race. It is due to this fact that there are no socially important groups in Minas Velhas, which are determined by purely physical characteristics (Harris 1956: 126).

In his comparative study on Brazil and the United States, Carl Degler (1976, originally: 1971) agreed with Harris' statement that having a "black skin" represents both a barrier for social upward mobility and a cause for social exclusion. According to Degler, what distinguished Brazil from the United States at this time was what he called the "mulatto escape hatch". He believed that the presence of "mulattoes" who counted as "socially acceptable" blurred the "colour line". In this respect, and unlike in the United States, the large social presence of 'mulattoes' complicated the idea of a "white race" and a "black race" as an all-encompassing attribute that overshadows all other characteristics. However, this aspect did neither stop the advancement nor the continuous circulation of racist thought and racist practices.

A research group at the Universidade de Sao Paulo around the sociologist Florestan Fernandes came up with similar findings, as did Fernandes' doctoral students Fernando Cardoso and Octávio Ianni (Cardoso 1962, Cardoso/Ianni 1960, Ianni 1966). Fernandes' own research in Sao Paulo (Bastide/Fernandes 1959, Fernandes 1965) also demonstrated the significance of racist attitudes for explaining social inequality in Brazil (see also Guimarães 2002).

Since the 1980s, new generations of U.S.-American social scientists and Brazilian scholars trained in the United States have been examining the relations between whites and blacks in Brazil by focusing mainly on the category of race. This theoretical and methodological perspective known as "racial studies" currently represents a hegemonic research paradigm of sociological studies on racism in Brazil (see: Hanchard 1994, Telles 2003).

Within this framework, the understanding of race as an analytical category is legitimatised through observations of social inequalities, which are predicated on racist ascriptions. Basing their work on social indicators, representatives of the field of racial studies emphasize that racial inequalities in Brazil follow bi-racial patterns comparable to categorizations that are used in the United States. According to this view, access to social mobility is organized alongside a bipolar hierarchy, despite the reality of many different skin colours that shape an individual's self-perception (Costa 2006, 2010a). For the purposes of this paper, two important distinctions must be drawn between the first set of studies carried out by U.S. American researchers until the 1970s and a second set conducted since the 1980s, when racial studies became a dominant paradigm. Indeed, social scientists like Pierson and Harris spoke of racial relations. However, this aspect was tied to an examination of different forms of group relations (ethnic, cultural, inter-religious and so forth). Racial studies, in contrast, define the polarity of white and black as central, thus losing sight of ethnicity – that is, processes of socially signifying and performing body features - as an element that shapes social inequalities.

However, racial studies have absorbed discussions on intersectionality, a debate that began in the United States at the end of the 1980s. As a consequence, racial studies scholars have included gender alongside race discrimination as a central cause of inequality (see Lovel 1995, Nobles 2000)<sup>1</sup>. Research carried out before the 1980s mostly ignored this dimension.

For the examination of interdependencies between different axes of stratification in Latin America, and above all in the Andes region, the concept of “horizontal inequalities” is equally relevant. This term has been coined by development economist Frances Stewart (Stewart 2000, Stewart 2010, Stewart/Brown/Mancini 2005). According to Stewart, an individual's social position in a given society corresponds to the sum of vertical and horizontal inequalities. The former refers to the differences between individuals on a social scale, and the latter to the differences between groups.

By focusing on horizontal inequalities, Stewart aims to broaden the conventional economic view on the causes of social inequality. She sees group identity or belonging not only as determined by economic factors, but also by political, religious, ethnic, racial, and gender-specific criteria. However, the question of group definition is still difficult to answer: Given that an individual can at the same time feel a sense of belonging to different groups, how does one define a group? Additionally considering

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<sup>1</sup> In this context, there is a particular emphasis on discrimination against black women who in Brazil earn a third of what white men earn on average terms (see: PNUD/IPEA 2004).

the inequalities that group affiliations engender, a causal relationship between group membership and inequality is by no means obvious. Stewart accordingly argues the following:

To some extent, then, group boundaries become endogenous to group inequality. If people suffer discrimination (i.e. experience horizontal inequality) they may then feel cultural identity more strongly, particularly if others categorise them into groups for the express purpose of exercising discrimination (thereby creating or enforcing HIs [horizontal inequalities]) (Stewart/Brown/Mancini 2005: 9).

In order to circumvent difficulties in defining relevant groups, Stewart proposes testing the influence of different social categories on social inequalities. Self-ascriptions to a particular group should be considered here.

In line with the horizontal inequalities approach, Rosemary Thorp and Maritza Paredes (2010) have examined social inequalities in Peru and identified three main groups: white, mestizos, and indigenous. In combination with other significant axes of inequality – in particular, locality of residence (rural, urban, etc.), gender and class – an individual's membership to one of these three groups determines his/her position in Peruvian society. This is illustrated by the data on poverty shown in the table below:

**Figure 1: Poverty Status in Peru  
(According to Household Expenditure per Capita)**

	Indigenous	Mestizo	Whites
Extremely poor	24.1	5.8	1.8
Poor	29.3	22.2	7.2
Non poor	44.6	72.0	91.0

Source: Thorp/Paredes (2010)

## 1.2 Global, Transnational, Transregional: Inequalities and Entanglements

Among recent efforts for overcoming methodological nationalism in the research on inequality, two approaches can be singled out: the world-system approach and the transnational approach.

Departing from dependency theory and from early works of Immanuel Wallerstein, the world-system approach focuses on the interdependencies between different regions as well as the historical character of inequalities. The recent work of Timothy Moran and Roberto Korzeniewicz (Korzeniewicz/Moran 2009, Korzeniewicz/Moran 2008, Korzeniewicz 2011) represents a paradigmatic example of the developments of inequality studies as part of world-system research.

These authors differentiate between a first group of countries, which are characterized by a high disparity in income distribution, and a second group of countries which show only slight differences in income disparity. Their studies have ascertained that the position of the countries included in each of these two groups has, for the most part, not changed since the eighteenth century. It becomes clear, then, that these inequality standards go as far back as the colonial period. In contrast to the hitherto hegemonic literature, the authors demonstrate that the persistence of low and high levels of inequality cannot be explained by domestic factors alone. Instead, a country's potential to remedy existing inequality through redistributive policies is inextricably tied to the global economy and world politics. Therefore a country's position in world economy and its internal inequalities are interdependently connected:

The arguments we advance require an alternative perspective on stratification. Rather than being nationally bounded, [...], institutional arrangements constitute relational mechanisms of regulation, operating within countries while simultaneously shaping interactions and flows between them (Korzeniewicz/Moran 2008: 11).

The position of social actors in transnational structures of inequalities rather than historical formations of inequality is the central focus of transnational approaches in the research on equality. I would like to refer briefly to the research of two German sociologists, Ludger Pries and Anja Weiß as exemplary for this approach. Both work on inequality and transnational migration.

Pries' empirical work (2008) is principally concerned with labour migration between Mexico and the United States. He argues that the traditional unit of reference in the research on inequality, that is, nation-state borders, does not suffice alone in order to explaining how labour migrants are embedded in structures of inequality. Indeed, the potential social mobility of these migrants is not only determined inside Mexico or the United States, but simultaneously shifts between several national labour markets. According to Pries, these migrants move between new transnational, pluri-local spaces, where new forms of citizenship and access to rights are practiced, and changes to

material living conditions by way of remittances and information exchange also occur. Therefore, it is worthwhile for inequality research to take pluri-local/transnational spaces seriously:

Alongside these units of analysis – enmeshed like Russian dolls – (local, national, supranational and global), pluri-local as a unit of analysis for phenomena such as household economy or education strategies is of fundamental importance like in the case of transnational migrants and social space distributed over different national societies (Pries 2008: 62).

Anja Weiß's work (Weiß 2005, Weiß/Berger 2008) focuses on highly skilled migrants in Germany. Unlike Pries, she is not searching for a spatial unity of reference to help explain new transnational biographies. Rather, she is looking for categories to describe the social position of actors beyond national borders. Basing her analysis on Bourdieu's concept of capital, she shows how certain groups of migrants hold transnationally valid cultural capital, so that their position in the receiving society is partially determined by this accumulated capital. In other cases accomplishments which enjoy high esteem in the country of origin (e.g. a university degree from an elite university in India) are not recognized in the new country of residence:

I have argued that geographical, social and structural autonomy from the nation-state can be an important aspect of upward social mobility in the world. A migratory life-course may be characterized by social autonomy. And it can structurally be defined as a portfolio of resources that are globally acknowledged and asked for. A specific subgroup of highly skilled migrants combines both features to some extent. As their cultural capital is transnationally accepted and asked for, barriers to migration are reduced, which permits them to move with few restrictions in globalized labour markets. The majority of migrants are in a less desirable position. Migration results in a depreciation of their location-specific capital. Nevertheless, migrants are able to improve their social position with spatial change (Weiß 2005: 723).

### **1.3 Articulating Social Categorisations, Historical, and Geographical Interdependencies**

Up to this point, I have focused separately on research approaches which examine interdependencies between social inequalities and various social categorisations (class, race, gender, ethnicity etc.) on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the ties between transnational processes and social inequalities.

The Research Network on Interdependent Inequalities in Latin America (<[www.desiguALdades.net](http://www.desiguALdades.net)>) is working on integrating both forms of interdependencies by constructing an approach of "entangled inequalities"<sup>2</sup>. The table below depicts the dimensions this approach incorporates:

**Figure 2: Social Inequalities and Interdependencies: New Approaches**

<b>Approach/ Author</b>	<b>Horizontal Inequalities (e.g. Stewart)</b>	<b>Racial Studies (e.g. Telles, Nobles)</b>	<b>World System Approach (e. g. Moran, Korzeniewicz)</b>	<b>Transnational Approach (e. g. Pries, Weiß)</b>	<b>Entangled Inequalities</b>
<b>Features</b>					
<b>Unit of Analysis</b>	Local, National	National	World Regions: Centre, Periphery, Semi-periphery	Transnational/ Plurilocal Spaces	Relational Contexts: Regimes, and Configurations of Inequality
<b>Focus</b>	Economic, Political, Legal Asymmetries	Racial/ Gender Domination	Flows: Global Trade, Financial Flows	Actors: Transnational Classes, Families, Networks of Migrants	Transregional Flows and Actors; Economic, Political, Legal Asymmetries
<b>Axes of Inequality</b>	Groups defined by Nationality, Race, Religion, etc.	Class, Race, Gender	Class	Class, Nationality	Interdependencies between Diverse Axes of Inequality
<b>Temporality</b>	Synchronic	Synchronic	Diachronic	Synchronic	Synchronic/ Diachronic

Source: Own elaboration based on Pries 2008

As becomes obvious here, entangled inequalities as a product of interdependencies between different regions as well as between diverse social categorisations cannot be understood by a predefined spatial unit of analysis. Rather, what is needed are relational units able to incorporate all (relevant) factors contributing to structures of inequality. These relational units should vary depending on the respective object of investigation. In certain cases, the concept of inequality regime has proven particularly useful in exploring existing entangled inequalities.

<sup>2</sup> The focus on entangled inequalities is inspired by Conrad & Randeria (2002) who coined the expression "entangled modernities" in order to overcome both Eurocentric interpretations of modern history and the concept of multiple modernities. Similar to Conrad & Randeria we insist on interdependencies between structures of inequalities observed in different world regions. Going beyond their research focus, we use the concept entangled inequalities also to describe interdependencies between different axes of stratification.

According to my own definition, an inequality regime<sup>3</sup> includes:

- Logics of stratification/redistribution defined as static (caste societies), dynamic (class societies) or combined (class with racial/ethnic/gender ascription);
- Political, scientific, and popular discourses according to which individuals or groups interpret and construct their own positions and that of others in society;
- Legal and institutional frameworks (e.g. apartheid law, multicultural or anti-discrimination laws);
- Policies (e.g. racist migration policies, integration or compensatory policies);
- Models of conviviality in everyday life (segregating or integrating convivial forms) ; (see: Gilroy 2005)

On the basis of this definition of an inequality regime, I explore, in the following section, inequalities that affect Afro-Descendants in Latin America.

## **2. Afro-Descendants in Latin America: Regimes of Inequalities**

From a socio-economic, political, and cultural perspective, Afro-Latin Americans represent a very heterogeneous population. Accordingly, this demographic category includes different groups such as communities on the coast of Colombia distinguished by particular life forms and traditions transmitted over generations, and an emerging middle class in São Paulo that is well integrated into the labour market of this global city.

This heterogeneity is also reflected in demographic statistics. Out of 19 Latin American countries, 16 record ethnic self-identification in their census. Nine countries explicitly list a box for an Afro-Latin American group identity. The corresponding question, however, varies from country to country. In Brazil, Cuba, or El Salvador one is asked for skin colour (black, white or brown). The census in Honduras and Guatemala asks for “ethnic identity” according to groups such as “Garífuna” or an English-speaking black minority (Antón et al. 2009).

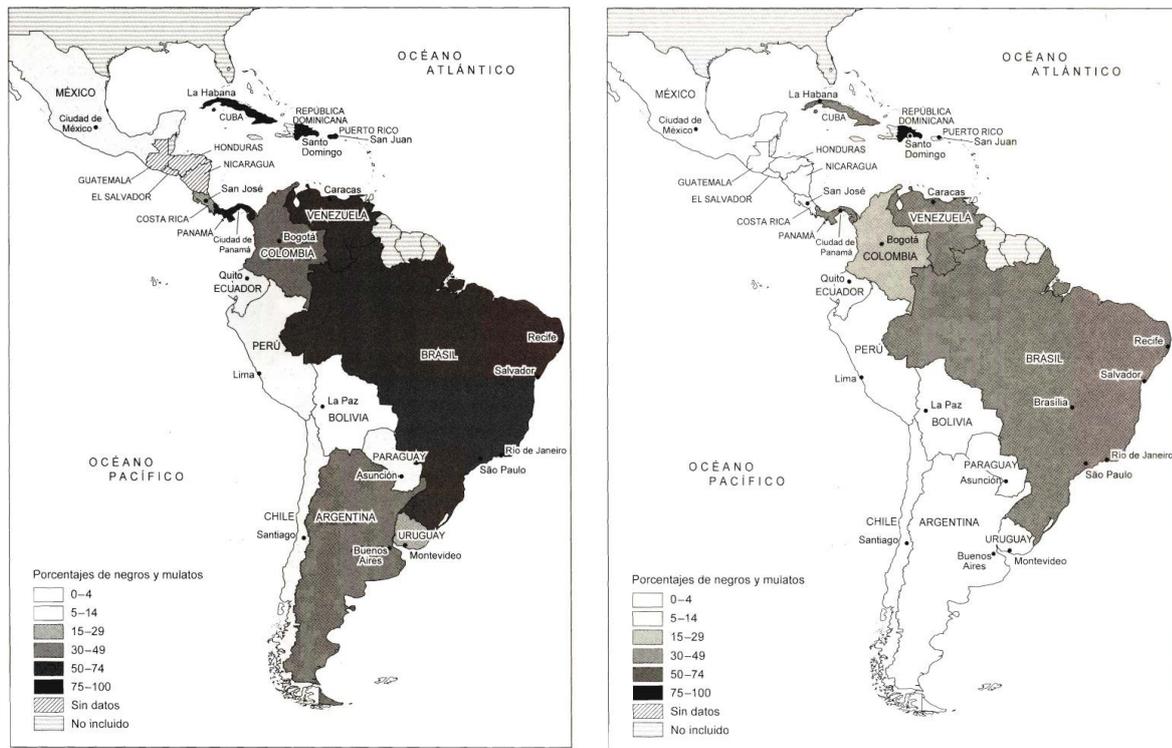
The categorial discrepancies between the census in the various Latin American and Caribbean countries make it difficult to accurately determine the size of the Afro Latin American population(s). From a historical perspective, a decrease in the Afro Latin

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<sup>3</sup> Joan Acker (2006) developed the term inequality regime and with it an entire research program dedicated to exploring the relations between gender, race, and class inside organisations. Her work is a powerful contribution to the discussions on intersectionality, but one that does not deal with the transnational or historical dimension of inequality. Therefore, despite the semantic similarities, the term inequality regime used here has little in common with Acker’s research program.

American population vis-à-vis the total population of Latin America can be observed, as the maps below shows:

**Figure 3: Afro-Latin American Population 1800 and 2000**



Source: Andrews 2004

However, recent national surveys record an increase in the percentage of Afro Latin American populations in some countries. This trend is most likely related to the new political framework and reflects phenomena such as the emergence of a new Black movement and the expansion of rights and policies for Afro-Descendants.

According to an estimate from ECLAC, the United Nations (UN) Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Afro Latin Americans make up 30% of the population in Latin America and the Caribbean – or 150 million out of 500 million. Geographically, the Afro Latin American population is concentrated in Brazil (50%), Columbia (20%), Venezuela (10%), and in the Caribbean (16%) (Antón et al. 2009). On average, Afro-Latin Americans – in particular women – have a shorter life expectancy, live in poorer conditions, have lower levels of formal education, and have more limited access to public services than the Latin America population as a whole.

If Afro-Latin Americans are such a heterogeneous group and their demographic data present such broad gaps, what are the reasons for grouping such a population into one category?

One can assume that alongside a common history, there are similar structures of inequality and an analogous legal and policy framework that unite Afro Latin Americans across national borders. Thus, treating Afro Latin Americans as a group that transcends national borders highlights a clear transnational reference with regard to structures of inequality that is generally overlooked in nation-state-centric approaches<sup>4</sup>.

Inequalities between Afro-Latin Americans and white Latin Americans can not be primarily explained by the disadvantages accumulated during the period of slavery. Research has successfully shown that in various countries being categorized as non-white still correlates directly with a lower socio-economic status and one's chances for upward mobility. Consequently, if one statistically controls the usual factors that contribute to inequality such as region, gender, income, and the school education of parents, the differences that remain between social positions in any given society can only be explained by 'skin colour' (Costa 2006).

The table below presents poverty indicators for Brazil, Ecuador, and Nicaragua as an example of the inequalities that exist (and persist) today:

**Figure 4: Population Below Poverty and Indigence Line by Ethnic Group (Percentages)**

Country	Ethnic Group	Indigent	Poor Non-Indigent	Total Poverty
Brazil (2006)	Afro-Descendant	13.0	31.9	44.8
	White	5.0	16.8	21.7
	Total	9.0	24.3	33.2
Ecuador (2006)	Afro-Descendant	22.4	36.2	58.5
	White/Mestizo	14.2	25.4	39.6
	Total	15.4	26.1	41.5
Nicaragua (2001)	Afro-Descendant	56.3	31.3	87.6
	White/Mestizo	41.2	27.0	68.2
	Total	42.3	26.8	69.1

Source: Antón et al.: 2009

<sup>4</sup> Historically, Afro Latin Americans have experienced a common history ("geteilte Geschichte") in the double meaning of the term as understood by Conrad and Randeria (2002): shared und divided. This means a shared experience as part of an African Diaspora in Latin America, but this experience is divided in the narratives of national histories.

In the course of the slave trade between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, approximately 10 million enslaved Africans were brought to the European colonies in Latin America and the Caribbean to work the plantations and mines. In 1804, Haiti was the first country in the region to abolish slavery; Brazil was the last in 1888 (Andrews 2004). In some countries, slavery even survived after national independence.

The consolidation of nation-states followed the end of slavery, and reflected in this period of nation building the influence of scientific racism coming from Europe. The founding fathers of Latin American states made deliberate efforts to “Europeanise” their societies by controlling immigration and prohibiting Afro Latin American religious and cultural practices in order to deny an African legacy. As historian Andrews puts it, this period was dominated by a “war on blackness”.

In all countries of the region, writers, politicians, and state planners wrestled with the problem of Latin America’s racial inheritance. As firm believers in racial determinism, they had no doubts that the historical trajectories of individuals, nations, and people were irrevocably determined by their “racial” ancestry. [...] The Latin American response to this dilemma was a bold, visionary, and ultimately quixotic effort to transform themselves from racial mixed, predominantly nonwhite societies into white republics populated by Caucasians and their descendents (Andrews 2004: 118).

In the 1930s, a glorification of biological and cultural mixture expressed illustratively in the concept of so-called *mestizaje* supplanted racist nationalism. The dominant national discourses became marked by a national ideology celebrating a peaceful living together of all groups and traditions from European, indigenous, and African descent. The related emergence of cultural relativism in international cultural anthropology – and the work of Franz Boas especially – had a great influence on discourses on *mestizaje* in Latin America. Some of the most important inventors of *mestizaje* ideology have been directly influenced by Boas, among them Gilberto Freyre in Brazil and Fernando Ortíz in Cuba.

The position of Afro descendants in the *mestizaje* discourse is ambivalent. On the one hand, this discourse celebrates the role of Afro-Latin Americans as allies of the European colonisers within the process of “civilising” the tropics as well as their importance for the development of mixed national identities. At the same time, this discourse of inclusion signifies the surrender of an Afro-descendent identity. Thus, what is relevant for the *mestizaje* is no longer their African ancestry, but instead the integration of Afro-descendants into the Brazilian, Cuban, or Columbian nations

which represent, accordingly to the *mestizaje* discourse, a prolongation of European civilisation in the tropics (Costa 2006, Costa 2010a).

If the discourse on *mestizaje* functioned as a political program to assimilate and subordinate cultural differences, it also serves as a model of conviviality. Thus, ethnographic studies in Ecuador (Walsh 2009), Brazil (Almeida 2000, Sansone 2003) and Colombia (Wade 2005) have demonstrated how this discourse functions as a multi-layered construct that connects different patterns of intercultural coexistence. The findings of Peter Wade that are based on his studies of music in Colombia, popular religiosity in Venezuela and popular Christianity in Brazil are particularly valuable in this regard. Since individual and collective subjects reinterpret and re-define the ideological discourse in their daily lives, *mestizaje* is, for Wade, predominantly a lived experience:

All this leads us to a view of *mestizaje* which is rather different from the usual image of the nationalist processes striving to create a homogeneous identity that eventually erases blackness and indigenusness in order to end up with a whitened mestizo who represents the irretrievable fusion of three racial origins. It leads instead to the image of *mestizaje* as the construction of a mosaic, which can be embodied in a single person or within a complex of religious practices, as well as within the nation. This mosaic is rather different from the mosaic of what might be called official multiculturalism, in which each 'culture' is constrained within certain institutional boundaries, because the mosaic of *mestizaje* allows the permanent re-combination of elements in persons and practices (Wade 2005: 252).

As an ideology, the *mestizaje* still carries political resonance. However, since the 1990s, it has been challenged by a shifting international framework and from the presence of new protest actors on the national and international scene. These new developments make a case for the creation of a new pattern of inequality that I call compensatory regime.

Already during the 1980s, one could observe how multilateral organisations shifted their agenda and began to perceive "cultural diversity" as a resource for development and no longer as a problem. According to Kymlicka, such "multicultural odysseys" have radically changed the operating logic of multilateral organisations that had been dominant since the end of the Second World War:

[...] the architects of the UN, and of post-war regional organizations, assumed that minority rights were not only unnecessary for the creation of a viable new international order, but indeed destabilizing of such an order. Today, however, it is widely asserted, the accommodation of ethnic diversity is not only *consistent* with, but in fact a *precondition* for, the maintenance of a legitimate international order (Kymlicka 2007: 45).

The discourse on multiculturalism has also entered the rhetoric of national and local governments in Latin America, a rhetoric that now publicly celebrates the cultural identity of indigenous and Afro-descendants.

The role of different cultural and social movements cannot be underestimated in this context. Since the 1990s, the Afro Latin American movement has undergone an important process of transnationalisation and internal differentiation. Culturally, this has resulted in the rapid spread of so-called Black Culture within the imagined space of a Black Atlantic (Gilroy 1993, 2010), which in Latin America includes manifestations such as Reggae, Capoeira, and Hip Hop.

Politically, the 2001 UN World Conference against Racism held in Durban, South Africa represents a milestone. The preparatory and follow-up meetings to the conference made the founding of numerous Afro-Latin American organisations possible, as well as the establishment of important transnational, anti-racist networks. Furthermore, the mobilisation of black women and other representatives of internal minorities ensure a pluralisation of the Afro-Latin American movement by bringing the issue of the diversity of black subjects to the forefront (Costa 2006, Costa 2011).

These new developments have begun to make their way into social policies and new regulatory frameworks that affect the Afro Latin American population in different countries<sup>5</sup>.

Below, I give a cursory summary of the main legal instruments and social policies that support the interests of the Afro Latin American population. I distinguish three generations of measures.

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<sup>5</sup> In reference to policies that should protect and back the rights of the Afro Latin American population, it would also be important to consider the contributions of non-state actors and international cooperation agencies. This field includes numerous non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that provide legal information and head social projects as well as multilateral and international institutions such as the World Bank, that fund special programs supporting Afro-Ecuadoreans, and the Ford Foundation which is the most important financial supporter of political articulation for Afro-Brazilians (Telles 2003). In this paper, I limit myself to an overview of state measures concerning implementation of political, social, and cultural rights.

### (1) Protection against discrimination

On an international scale, the right to protection against discrimination goes back to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN in 1948. The UN's 1969 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), which until 1990 had been signed by all Latin American countries, is equally relevant in this context. In 1979, the Inter-American Court on Human Rights of the Organisation of American States (OAS) was established. In 2005, the "Rapporteurship on the Rights of Afro-Descendants and against Racial Discrimination" was created for reinforcing human rights of Afro-Descendants in the Americas (Olmos Giupponi 2010).

Latin American countries have mostly integrated these international conventions and human rights instruments into their constitutions. One could assume that discrimination on the basis of skin colour or ethnic belonging is subject to legal prosecution in Latin America at large. In terms of policy, many countries have set up information centres, specialised courts and advocacy centres that work exclusively on cases of discrimination against Afro-Latin Americans (Machado et al. 2008). The efficiency of such measures varies from country to country, depending on the degree of local consolidation of the rule of law (Costa 2011).

### (2) Protection of cultural rights

The second generation of legal instruments is associated with the already mentioned "multicultural odyssey." In this context, the Convention 169 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) delivered in 1989 cannot be underestimated. Nearly all countries in Latin America have ratified the convention, which granted rights to indigenous peoples. The term 'peoples' is important since it enables to refer to collective rights such as land claims and the preservation of languages. This is the reason why the Convention has become a central argument of legitimisation to further the demands of ethnic movements in Latin America. As a result, these demands have been respected in the latest constitutional reforms.

In countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Nicaragua, and Honduras, the realization of these rights in the form of concrete policies is especially pronounced. The assignment of ownership titles and the introduction of social programs are important measures that encourage the construction of so-called Afro-communities. Equally important are programs that promote "ethnic education" including measures like funding for research on the history of Afro Latin American communities, and the incorporation of the history of the African Diaspora into school curricula (Antón 2009, Olmos Giupponi 2010).

### (3) The promotion of equal opportunities (“positive discrimination”)

The third generation of legal instruments and policies that concern the Afro-Latin American population can be traced back to the local mobilisation in preparation for and during the 2001 UN conference in Durban. The conference declaration and its plan for action explicitly request that states guarantee Afro-Descendants adequate access to education, to new technologies, and to legal systems. Brazil and Colombia in particular have launched attempts to legally and institutionally implement the stated objectives of the conference.

For example, Brazil in 2003 established a federal authority with ministerial status for the “promotion of racial equality”. In Colombia, constitutional changes that would pave the legal way for supporting Afro-Colombians on the labour market and in the education system are under negotiation (Góngora-Mera 2011).

A similar type of backing has existed in Brazil since 2001. The quota system that was introduced at several public and private universities provides a noteworthy example. This system enables Afro-Brazilian high school graduates to bypass the difficult entrance exam at universities.

The program is controversial but it has shown its efficiency: Since its adoption the number of Afro-Brazilians matriculated at Brazilian universities has been permanently increasing (Costa 2010b).

It cannot be precisely determined how such new legal and policy frameworks affect structures of inequality. What is clear, however, is that ethnic, racial, and gender prejudices that shape structures of inequality in Latin America have not disappeared. One has to assume, then, that different mechanisms of stratification coexist in the compensatory inequality regime<sup>6</sup>.

These are:

- Class structures that govern the access to goods and desired positions in society according to market economy criteria;
- Racial, ethnic, and gender ascriptions. According to this mechanism of stratification, the access to goods and positions is defined by social prejudices;

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<sup>6</sup> According to my own definition of inequality regimes above, I should provide a description of convivial forms that are characteristic for the compensatory regimes. However, this would require an ethnographic observation of different everyday experiences in a variety of countries, a research I am not able to develop at this point.

- Target groups: belonging to a group defined by a certain policy determines the access to resources.

In order to clarify my remarks on all four regimes of inequality which have historically encompassed Afro-descendants in Latin America, I summarize them in the table below:

**Figure 5: Afro-Descendants in Latin America: Inequality Regimes**

	<b>Time</b>	<b>Stratification/ Redistribution Logics</b>	<b>Transregional Entanglements</b>
<b>Slavery</b>	Until 19th Century	Caste	Slave Traffic, Triangular Trade (Europe, Africa, Americas)
<b>Racist Nationalism</b>	From Abolition to approx. 1930	Racial Ascription	International Exchange within Scientific Racism (Europe, Americas)
<b>Mestizo Nationalism</b>	1930-1990	Class, Racial, Gender Ascription	Circulation of Culturalist Concepts (Americas)
<b>Compensatory Regime</b>	Since 1990	Class, Racial, Gender Ascription, Target Population	Transnational Anti-Racist Alliances (Black Atlantic), Multilateral Organisations

### 3. Conclusions

The concept of entangled inequalities, coined in this paper, is based on discussions of global linkages and interdependencies between social categorisations that determine social inequalities. Accordingly, inequalities are defined as asymmetries between positions of certain individuals or groups of individuals in a relationally (not spatially) determined context. This concerns economic positions (defined by income, access to resources and so on) as well as political and legal entitlements (rights, political power etc.). In order to understand the linkages from which unequal positions arise, it is necessary to have relational units of analysis that are dynamically defined in the process of inquiry itself. In a similar way, the interplay of social categorisations (gender, race, class, ethnicity etc.) cannot be articulated *ex-ante* in a formula. It can only be studied in the respective specific context.

By proposing the concept of inequality regimes, I have tried to coin a dynamic unit of analysis, which enables to take up the interdependencies between social categorisations and between different regions of the world. Moreover, the tracking of different interrelated regimes of inequality over time allows considering the historical construction of inequalities.

In the second half of the paper, I examined inequality regimes that have historically encompassed Afro-descendants in Latin America: slavery, racist nationalism, mestizo nationalism, and compensatory regime. Each regime has been shaped by a different set of global entanglements.

In each regime a specific interplay of social categorisations is at the forefront: During slavery, the status of being enslaved prevailed, while other ascriptions became secondary. Today, in contrast, one sees the position of a black-skinned person in a compensatory inequality regime made up of a complex combination of diverse categories: ethno-racial classifications, which cannot be reduced to a black-white duality, class, gender, target groups, etc.

Depending on which level of the inequality regime is taken into account, these positions vary: being categorized as 'dark skinned', for example, can be advantageous in relation to the access to some policies – e.g. quota. On other levels of the inequality regime – such as discourse, patterns of conviviality – being categorized as non-white is associated with a subordinated position.

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