"Somos migrantes en nuestro propio país": Identity-Expression of Indigenous Migrants in Mexico City (2008-2009)

Birgit Sulzer
Freie Universität Berlin

Resumen: Los cambios económicos y sociales en el ámbito rural en México han llevado a una creciente urbanización durante las últimas décadas. Esperando una vida mejor, un gran número de indígenas migra hacia espacios urbanos como la Ciudad de México. El artículo examina cómo los pueblos indígenas encuentran nuevas formas de expresar sus identidades étnicas en el ámbito urbano. Mediante diferentes casos de estudio se analiza en qué manera y por qué las identidades étnicas están dejadas, re-contextualizadas, re-definidas o re-vitalizadas. Además, el trabajo localizará los factores que influyen la formación de estas identidades.

Palabras clave: Ciudad de México, identidades étnicas, pueblos indígenas, urbanización, marginalización, siglo xxi.

Abstract: Economic and social changes in rural areas of Mexico have caused growing urbanization in recent decades. With expectation for a better life, an increasing number of indigenous people migrate to urban conglomerates such as Mexico City. The article examines how indigenous people find ways to express their ethnic identities in the urban space. On the basis of different case studies this text analyzes how and why ethnic identities are given up, re-contextualized, re-defined or re-vitalized. Moreover, the factors that influence these identity-formations shall be localized.

Keywords: Mexico City, ethnic identities, indigenous people, urbanization, marginalization, 21st century.

Introduction

Coming to Mexico City one will be impressed by the great archeological sites, numerous anthropological museums, and murals; evidence of the pre-Hispanic heritage of the country. As important as the pre-Columbian culture may be for the Mexican people, the process of searching for a national identity reveals the contradiction between the pride of the indigenous heritage and the marginalization of the present indigenous population in the Mexican society. The mechanisms of marginalization become obvious when indigenous people migrate to the big cities.

According to Pérez Ruíz approximately 2.4 million indigenous people are living in urban areas (Pérez Ruíz 2007: 72), around one million of them in Mexico City (Yanes Rizo 2008). Despite an ongoing decentralization, Mexico City still is a very important

point of attraction for migrants of the whole country (Bonfil Batalla 1991: 28; Sánchez 2004: 72; Pérez Ruiz 2007: 75). Especially the indigenous population, who live under precarious conditions in the rural areas, try to escape from economic, social and political problems by moving to the capital city (Oehmichen Bazán 2004: 386).

Concentrating on indigenous migrants of the first generation, this work examines different forms of identity expression in the urban space. The article is based on a three-month fieldwork in Mexico City, which I accomplished for my master thesis from November 2008 to January 2009. During this time I conducted research on five different case studies. I collected a broad range of qualitative data such as semi-structured interviews, participant observation, informal talks, complemented by interviews with experts on the topic of indigenous migration in Mexico. One of these experts I was talking to is the Mexican anthropologist Alicia Castellanos Guerrero, who will also be cited in this article.

While mainly focusing on one of my case studies, the indigenous organization 'Asamblea de los migrantes indígenas en la Ciudad de México' (AMI), I will also bring up some statements of other interview partners in this work to underline my arguments.

The AMI, where I collected the major part of my interview data, is a cooperation of various indigenous communities and individuals who moved from rural areas to the Mexican capital. Members of 15 different indigenous groups participate in the intercultural and pluri-ethnic project. Together with non-indigenous people the members want to create a space, which offers the possibility to express and live indigenous identities in the urban space. Promoting indigenous languages and cosmology, performing and making music as well as traditional dances can help to strengthen and re-vitalize indigenous cultures and identities. Another goal of the AMI is the reproduction of the communitarian life, which is characterized by a special system of distribution of functions and the so-called *tequio*. The *tequio* is a special form of voluntary community work, based on reciprocal contribution for the collective. Built on this communitarian work the members of the organization accomplish different kinds of cultural and educational projects. The AMI also provides the access to communication media such as the internet. A multilingual radio program helps sustain the use of indigenous languages. The realization of these projects is possible through cooperation of scientific institutions as well as with the material and intellectual support of indigenous groups themselves. The organization also fights for a better visibility of indigenous people in the Mexican and international political arena. During my fieldwork at the AMI I participated in their meetings and fiestas and got an insight into their everyday work.

Regarding the described situation of indigenous migrants in Mexico City I generated my central questions of investigation which are as follows: How do indigenous people express their identities in the urban space and how is ethnic identity reformu-

lated and re-defined in the context of rural-urban migration? I also located insecurities and examined in which way these harassments affect the process of self and external ascription of indigenous identities.

To answer these questions I will discuss the concept of ethnicity as an analytical instrument and bring it together with my empirical material. It should also be highlighted what role ethnic categorization plays in the frame of the Mexican nation-state as this still leads to a nationwide marginalization of the indigenous people in the different spheres of the society. Analyzing historical processes of discrimination and discussing personal experiences of my interview partners, different factors that influence the expression of indigenous identities in the city will be examined. Bringing together theoretical assumptions with my very own empirical work I will develop three models to describe different forms of identity-expressions of indigenous people who are located in the urban space.

The transformation of social structures by analyzing group identity processes in the context of urbanization is a central object of interest in the recent anthropological and sociological research in Mexico (Yanes Rizo 2008; Portal Ariosa 2001; Romer 2005; Oehmchen Bazán 2004; Sánchez 2004; Sieglin 2008a). A great number of social scientists attend to the topic from different theoretical perspectives such as from gender perspective, social network theories, and the analysis of mechanisms of racism or historically formed structures of inequalities. The German sociologist Veronika Sieglin (2008b) analyzes migration from the psycho-sociological point of view, also taking a closer look at the communities of origin. Governmental institutions like the Comisión para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas (CDI) try to analyze the situation of indigenous groups in Mexico City to derive concrete political actions that should improve the social and political position of ethnic minorities in the capital.

As I will discuss in my contribution, the examples of my fieldwork show that the individual situation and experiences of indigenous migrants are quite diverse. I will also outline different factors that influence the way in which the expression of indigenous identities is being transformed in the urban space.

Social networks and cultural practices are changing as well as political and economic processes as I will highlight in my article. In some cases the confrontation with discrimination, racism, and economic insecurities also plays an important role in the lives of the migrants regarding their everyday lives and identity perceptions due to external ascriptions.

To better understand the initial position of the research field we first take a closer look at the historical delineation of urbanization processes and indigenous migration to the Mexican capital.

Urbanization and indigenous migration in Mexico

Processes of globalization and modernization lead to an increasing migration of the rural population to cities in the search for better work and living conditions (Oehmichen Bazán 2004: 386). Experts of the UN proclaim that in the future the majority of the world population will be living in urban conglomerates (UN Permanent Forum 2007). In Mexico as well as in other Latin-American countries, this phenomenon affects the indigenous population increasingly because of the changing economic and social conditions in rural areas. Nowadays around 2.8 million indigenous people living in Mexico are city dwellers. This is about 43.5 percent of the national indigenous population (Sulzer 2009: 40).

The origin of rural depopulation in Mexico lies in the uprising processes of industrialization in the 1940s (Valencia Rojas 2000: 153). The re-organization of the agricultural economy to an industrialized system caused the expulsion of peasant organized farmers. During the import-substituted industrialization in the 1970s Mexico City became central in the modernization process of the country as the investment and financial assets were concentrated in the city. Even though there has been a decrease of migration to the capital during the last decades, Mexico City still is an important point of attraction for indigenous people.

A lack of labor, low productivity of the soil, decreasing prices for agricultural products, little demand of crafts-goods and a limited access to education and social institutions as well as increasing religious conflicts lead to a growing number of people migrating to the capital in expectation of a better life and income (UN Permanent Forum 2007; Hernández García & Hidalgo Ledesma 2003: 40-41; Horbath 2006: 11f). According to this, a saleswoman from Guerrero working at the tourist market 'Mercado Ciudadela' in the center of Mexico City mentions:

> No hay muchas cosas y son muy caras y ahí no hay ayuda. Y aquí sí, por lo menos nos dedicamos a la artesanía [...] no bien que tenemos un espacio donde vendemos nuestra artesanía [...] (Interview Mercado Ciudadela, 2009).

Furthermore national construction projects, which threaten indigenous land and demographic pressure as well as climatic change, make life in rural areas more and more complicated (INI 1996):

> Las reservas naturales que nos mete el Dios no pertenecen a nosotros. Y llegan las compañeras extranjeras de los mismos gobiernos y les venden las tierras a nosotros. Hacen leyes para expropiar las tierras de los indígenas porque son ricas [...] (Interview AMI, 2009).

Apart from these push-factors, subjective reasons such as opportunities for education, better access to technologies or individual challenges are also an important point for migration, as gets obvious in some of the talks with members of the AMI and in other

case studies. De la Peña (1995) also mentions that kinship networks are another central factor in the process of migration which will be discussed later on.

With approximately 20 million inhabitants (World Population Prospects 2007) Mexico City has to deal with problems such as environmental issues, inadequate infrastructure, a lack of housing, increasing unemployment, crime, and social disparities (Scholz 2004: 14). The cultural and social heterogeneity and the coexistence of different ethnic groups in Mexico City also lead to an extreme economic and social polarization of the society (Spreitzhofer 2004: 5; Scholz 2004: 14; García Canclini 2004: 63). This causes a growing number of people living in poverty as well as the marginalization of indigenous people. Migrants furthermore have to deal with unknown challenges like unemployment, violence, racism, and a limited access to constitutional institutions. Insecurities and harassments like such require the construction of new mechanisms to create social security in the urban space. It can be observed that indigenous migrants predominantly reside in origin specific communities located in delegations such as Gustavo A. Madero, Cuauhtémoc, Iztapalapa, Iztacalco, Hidalgo, Alvaro Obregón, Xochimilco, Milpa Alta, Venustiano Carranza and Coyoacán (INI 1996; Sánchez 2004: 72). This strategy facilitates the maintenance of the cohesion and conservation of certain elements of indigenous ethnic identity and allows people to create networks of help and support (INI 1996; Sánchez 2004: 72; De la Peña 1993: 275, 278; Gilbert 1998: 50; Pérez Ruiz 2007: 87).

Hoping to overcome the social, economic and political marginalization that is experienced in rural areas, indigenous people again find themselves confronted with discrimination and socio-cultural problems when they move to the capital. Questions of belonging and the re-definition of social as well as individual identities seem more important in the heterogeneous social structure of the urban space.

That brings us back to the first question of how indigenous identities are being expressed and lived in the urban area. Based on the fieldwork and on a theoretical discussion, the next part would be an attempt to conceptualize ethnicity and its meaning in the frame of the nation-state.

Notions about 'ethnicity'

The rediscovery of indigenous characteristics and particularities such as indigenous languages, cosmologies, and communitarian work during the last decades led to an increasing expansion of indigenous traditions from the regional-family based space into the public spheres of the Mexican state (Mader 2004: 4; Mader & Sharup 1993: 109). These aspects, which characterize indigenous identities, should also be re-produced and re-located in the urban space, as a member of the AMI highlights:

> Aquí lo que hacemos es reproducir nuestra cultura: música, la gastronomía o comida, costumbres, la cosmogonía. La cosmogonía encierra toda una seria de costumbres que se hacen en los pueblos. Y aquí trabajamos con los métodos de los pueblos (Interview AMI, 2008).

This statement reminds us of Max Weber's definition of ethnic identity as the basis of belonging to a group with collective customs and traditions, a shared memory and, as Weber calls it, an artificial "Stammesgemeinschaftsglauben" (Weber 1980: 237). The artificial collectivization of a group is neither based on a real blood relationship nor on a common origin of the members. This becomes obvious in the case of the AMI, where different ethnic groups with diverse linguistic backgrounds and different customs rely on a common origin. Furthermore, they develop new forms of indigeneity disregarding their individual ethnic origin. At the same time identification markers as described by Weber, such as language and cosmology, still seem to be central for indigenous identification as confirmed by many of the people I interviewed.

Since Weber, terms like ethnic and ethnicity have been discussed numerously and also gained more and more importance not only in scientific discussions. Moreover, the concept becomes central in political as well as social discourses and practices (Noack 2011: 33) as "the rights of political participation are also bound to ethnic criteria" (Albiez-Wieck et al. 2011: 9). Ethnicity does not only play a significant role in the political arena to express the belonging to a certain group, but also serves as a tool for analyzing social practices (Albiez-Wieck et al. 2011: 10). Apart from that it helps to understand historically formed boundaries along ethnic categorizations in the frame of the Mexican nation-state and in the context of indigenous migration.

Regarding boundaries of ethnic groups, one of the most important authors on theories about ethnicity is Frederic Barth. In his broadly discussed introduction of the essay-collection "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries", Barth assumed that ethnicity is "super-ordinated to most other statuses, and defines the permissible constellation of statuses, or social personalities, which an individual with that identity may assume" (Barth 1998: 17). Barth proposes analyzing the borders and the relations between different ethnic groups rather than focusing on the latent content of what defines an ethnic community. As ethnic groups are not enclosed and terminated systems, physical and ideological correlations can therefore not be observed as isolated from one another. Being a subject of its social environment (Gentes 2000: 25) an ethnic group is no static construct but a generated phenomenon, which is subordinated to continuous transformations especially in the context of social relations:

> Por lo que toca a su contenido, hemos dicho que la tendencia actual es definir el concepto de etnia, no en forma aislada o substancialista, sino en relación dinámica e interactiva con otros conceptos adyacentes como los de nación, Estado y ciudadanía (Giménez 2004: 6).

Regarding the relational component of ethnicity, which indeed plays a significant role in the case of indigenous migrants, the examination of ethnic identity leads to an historical analysis of the concept (Noack 2011: 34) within the nation-state. Moreover, this helps to detect existing power structures and inequalities (Camus 2000: 25). Orywal describes ethnicity as a process of cultural differentiation and as a process of self and external ascription (Gentes 2000: 25) as some statements of my interview partners clearly highlight:

> Somos más mexicanos que los que están en la cuidad, porque tenemos nuestro territorio en los pueblos. [...] Porque de algún momento cuando indígenas escriben libros, estos libros van a ser de su visión: de cómo viven indígenas. [...] Porque los libros se escriben sobre indígenas son desde un punto de vista del mestizo, del blanco (Interview AMI, 2008).

Even though the pre-Hispanic past of Mexico seems to be very important for the formation of a national identity, negative ascriptions, stereotyping of indigenous population, and racist practices that my interview partners also experience in their everyday lives have not been overcome.

Uprising indigenous movements such as the Zapatista movement opened the way for the claim for an extensive recognition of cultural and communitarian rights. These processes indeed led to a growing revitalization and strengthening of indigenous identities (Díaz Markowitz 2006: 80; Mader 2004: 4; Mader & Sharup 1993: 109) and an increasing desire of indigenous people to participate in national politics. This is also one of the major goals of the AMI:

> [...] los indígenas nos tenemos que posicionar. [...] El levantamiento Zapatista en 1994 abre una posibilidad grande para los indígenas en la ciudad, en todas partes y el reclama [...] (Interview AMI, 2008).

The statement underlines the fact that indigenous people still find themselves in a marginalized position inside the Mexican nation-state. Even though all members of a nation-state should have the same rights as citizens, ethnic identity can be instrumentalized by the politically dominant group to control the access to ideological or material resources (Orywal 1999: 101; Giménez 2006: 7). To better understand how these mechanisms of inequalities work, we can observe the nation-state through the eyes of Foucault as a discursive system. According to Foucault, the world is produced by discourses, which locate the individuals in the social space offering or denying the access to national resources. These discourses are closely related to power-relations and are constantly reproduced by social practices (Foucault 1991: 15, 26; Sieglin 2008a: 14). The predominant discourse "[...] privilegia a unos, relega a otros y silencia a otros más" (Sieglin 2008a: 15). In the case of the AMI in Mexico City the members experience this silencing in the form of a political marginalization and the absence of the recognition of their community rights:

> Y además el Estado mismo no le da los derechos que corresponden los indígenas, como que no los ve. Son invisibles antes del Estado, o somos invisibles. Y entonces tratamos que se nos reconozca cómo colectivo (Interview AMI, 2008).

Even though there only exist limited possibilities to upgrade their social capital (Sieglin 2008a: 19), indigenous people create new political and social spaces to participate in national discourses, as examples like the Asamblea show. Nevertheless, the inequalities along ethnic categorizations still exist and lead to various forms of insecurities for indigenous people as shall be discussed in the following chapter.

Insecurities for indigenous people in D.F.

As discussed previously, indigenous people coming to Mexico City also face several types of social and economic insecurities, which emerge in the urban surrounding. Youth unemployment, restricted access to social services or to political institutions, a low educational level, crime, and violence are just a few difficulties to be mentioned (INI 1996; Sánchez 2004: 72; UN Permanent Forum 2007).

Especially the difficult integration into the labor market linked to discrimination due to the ethnic background is a central factor that constitutes the intricate situation of indigenous people in the Mexican capital. In an interview the social and cultural anthropologist Alicia Castellanos Guerrero mentions:

> Unos de los problemas más graves de los pueblos indígenas o de los migrantes específicamente indígenas que llegan a las ciudades [...] están relacionados fundamentalmente con su inserción en el mercado laboral. La falta del empleo y el desempleo y el subempleo serían como algunas de las características muy constantes en casi todos los casos de la migración indígena hacía ciudades regionales o la ciudad capital, en este caso la ciudad de México (Interview Castellanos Guerrero, 2008).

This is problematic because in comparison to the life in the countryside, survival in the city requires the necessity of a paying occupation. In rural regions livelihood is ensured by the possession of land and substantial economy, whereas in the city the access to monetary means is indispensable to life:

> Aquí si no tienes dinero, no tienes trabajo y no comes en la ciudad. [...] Es más difícil aquí que en el pueblo. Aquí, si llega una a la ciudad tiene qué conseguir trabajo (Interview AMI, 2009).

This economic challenge forces families to incorporate the children into the accumulation of income. According to the 'Centro Interdisciplinario para el Desarrollo Social'(CIDES) 60 percent of indigenous children work in the streets of Mexico City (INI 1996). As a result of this development, the level of education among the indigenous population is very low, whereby social mobility is limited. Statistics show that the rate of illiteracy among indigenous people is four times higher than that of the not-indigenous

population (UN Permanent Forum 2007). Thus the possibilities for a higher education as well as the chance to challenge national elites and power structures are limited. Nonetheless, it has to be mentioned that the rate of literacy in urban regions is higher than in rural areas. Concerning the educational level it can also be observed that the gap between female and male education is decreasing in the urban regions (Pérez Ruiz 2007: 73). However, the majority of indigenous migrants still work not only in badly paid jobs, but also under precarious conditions.

In Mexico City indigenous people mostly work in construction, as household servants or salesmen and -women on the street. Characteristic for these sectors are the low income and bad labor conditions (Sánchez 2004: 73; Hernández García & Hidalgo Ledesma 2003: 38; Horbath 2006: 14). That is why many workers and servants are at the mercy of their employers, as Alicia Castellanos Guerrero acknowledges in an interview:

> (Las mujeres indígenas) trabajan desde las primeras horas muy temprano en la mañana y terminan la jornada a las 10 de la noche o a las 11, 12, [...] si pronto hay un evento especial, una fiesta de la familia. Piensan que las trabajadoras no tienen derecho de descanso, [...] violentando una normatividad según la ley (Interview Castellanos Guerrero, 2008).

Sánchez mentions in her work that the problem of exploitation of employees is an issue concerning the whole country. However, indigenous migrants are more affected because of their hindered access to juridical institutions due to their political and cultural marginalization (Sánchez 2004: 73; Stavenhagen 2000: 334; Yanes Rizo 2004: 196; Hernández García & Hidalgo Ledesma 2003: 38), as Castellanos Guerrero confirms:

> [Los migrantes indígenas] en las ciudades sufren además de otras formas de discriminación y que es por ejemplo la exclusión política. No hay espacios de una participación política. [...] Si uno observa las cifras, los datos estadísticos en relación que es la marginación, lo que es la discriminación social, indicadores de pobreza, tú vas a encontrar que los índices más altos, de marginación los tienen las poblaciones indígenas. [...] También sufren en las ciudades y que es por ejemplo la exclusión política, no hay espacios de una participación. [...] No hay una política de pleno reconocimiento de los derechos de los migrantes indígenas. Hay un debate pero aún no hay una legislación (Interview Castellanos Guerrero, 2008).

This statement brings us right back to the issue of marginalization and discrimination of indigenous people, especially concerning indigenous migrants in urban areas. Juridical injustice and insecurities at the labor market are intensified by ethnic discrimination articulated through racist and discriminatory actions expressing difference along ethnic categorization:

> Cuando llegas a la ciudad empiezan a discriminar. No tienes oportunidades de trabajo, te dan el trabajo más barato por ser indígena (Interview AMI, 2008).

Mexican anthropologist Alicia Castellanos Guerrero distinguishes between two types of discrimination. Firstly, as discussed earlier on, there is an obvious discrimination on the

labor market as well as in political processes. This apparent discrimination is additionally produced and re-produced in racist discourses of the national media:

Moreover, Castellanos Guerrero mentions the existence of a more subtle racism that is expressed in everyday situations and in the social interaction of different ethnic groups:

> Hay algunos estudios de Antropología, [...] trabajos de análisis del discurso en la prensa y la imagen que proyectan acerca de los Indígenas. Entonces en ese sentido habría como otros espacios en donde sufren un tipo de discriminación aún más fuerte. [...] En la prensa se difunde un discurso francamente no solo discriminatorio, desde el punto de vista social y étnico, sino también con expresiones racistas.
> [...] La discriminación socio-étnica, racial, que se expresa desde manera cotidiana no en forma abierta, se da a veces en forma más oculta [...] en todos los espacios de la vida cotidiana [...] en la escuela, en la calle (Interview Castellanos Guerrero, 2009).

All these examples demonstrate that there is a close link between discriminatory actions and discourses based on historically formed structures of inequality. The institutionalization of racist ascriptions in the process of juridical, political and ideological discourses and practices reproduce these forms of racism (Castellanos Guerrero 2001: 8; Hall 1994: 130). Especially in the urban space indigenous traditions are often seen as a counterpart of modernity and as an obstacle to a successful development of the country. For a broader discussion of racism and its impact on national politics and the social structure in Mexico see Castellanos Guerrero (2001).

The localization of the discussed insecurities in the urban space brings us back to the question of what factors influence the expression of indigenous identities in the process of migration to the city.

Influences on identity-expressions
First of all it has to be said that family and indigenous networks do have a positive influence on the maintenance of indigenous identities. It can be assumed that the expression of the ethnic identity is closely linked to the bound with the community of origin. As Sieglin (2008b) arguments, my investigations confirm that the maintenance of indigenous networks and the continuation of family-ties have a positive influence on the preservation of ethnic identities.

The expression of identity is combined with the linkage and contact to the community of origin as well as the contact to other indigenous people in the urban space. It can be observed that with the aid of indigenous networks in Mexico City the internal cohesion can be strengthened which goes along with the passing on of traditions, language and customs (Hirschmann 2007: 174).

If the migrated person receives the required psychological, ideological and maybe also material support, in most cases a continuation of the identification with the indi-

genous community takes place. On the other hand people who do not receive any social or financial help from the village or who do not stay in contact with the rural community lose more and more their identification as indigenous.

In the case of the AMI, the network of indigenous groups in the city allows a partial maintenance of rural structures. The preservation of certain practices like the *tequio* (voluntary community-work) as well as the *usos y costumbres* (system of self-government) serves as a central point of reference and identification for indigenous communities in the city:

> Y aquí trabajamos con los métodos de los pueblos. Hay trabajos que se realizan sin pagas, no reciben pago, eso es llama tequio, es un trabajo comunitario. Como si fuera un cargo en el gobierno del pueblo. Y no tienen pagas cuando son usos y costumbres como en el estado de Oaxaca. [...]
> Aquí lo que hacemos es reproducir nuestra cultura: música, la gastronomía o comida, costumbres. [...] La cosmogonía que encierra toda una seria de costumbres que se hacen en los pueblos – las fiestas de los Santos [...]. Se celebran eso así junto con el pueblo de manera colectiva. Todo este es que nosotros tratamos de hacer aquí en la ciudad (Interview AMI, 2008).

> [...] eso son las costumbres de los pueblos y en la ciudad es difícil trasladar eso, es difícil repetirlo, pero hay que reproducirlo acá. Aquí es mucho más caro reproducir ese tipo de costumbres, en la ciudad que en los pueblos, eso es la diferencia (Interview AMI, 2009).

Nonetheless, the different origins of the members require a re-definition and re-contextualization of cultural traditions in the urban context and lead to new combinations of specific cultural elements of the various groups. Affiliations to a single ethnic group become less important, which leads to the formation of a common indigenous identity. Additionally to this superior identification as indigenous, the members of the AMI still have strong bonds to their communities of origin:

> Sí, vamos dos o tres veces el año. Pero siempre hay contacto a través del teléfono o por internet, ahí hay internet también (Interview AMI, 2008).

The frequent contact allows an ongoing identification with the villages and its inhabitants:

> Para que puedan de un momento apoyar el desarrollo de los pueblos,... más de todo un colectivo pues de los pueblos, en qué pueden ayudar, a través de la técnica tal vez (Interview AMI, 2008).

If people can afford it, they go to the villages for important festivities or other big events. Even if there is not such a frequent contact with the people in the village or with the family, in some cases there still exist strong bonds with the earth (*tierra*), closely related to the central importance of earth in the indigenous cosmology.

Already existing networks of migrants in the city facilitate the orientation and the entrance to life in the capital for following family members.

The contact to the place of origin also goes along with the economic organization of the urban as well as of the rural indigenous population. It can be observed that the contact to the village of origin is related to the economic situation of both the migrants and the rural community and is characterized by reciprocity. In the case of a saleswoman in the tourist-market Mercado Ciudadela in Mexico City, handcrafted items produced in the rural area are sold at the market in the capital:

> Se hace en mi pueblo. Se borda a mano y allá se hace con máquinas antiguas [...] telares antiguas de pedales (Interview saleswoman, 2008).

The family in the village still lives from subsistence agriculture and the migration of a few family members permit the trade with handmade products as well as a better education for the children. This example highlights the importance of migrants for the rural communities: "Migration [...] has clearly become part of the survival strategy of many rural households" (Gilbert 1998: 50).

Coherent to an unpleasant economic situation, the importance to maintain the indigenous culture and identity is decreasing. Instead of finding ways to preserve indigenous traditions, the need to develop survival strategies seems to be central.

In some cases the migrants also depend on the support of the rural networks and ties. The rural community supported one of my interview partners, who came to Mexico City to study, financially. In return, he plans to work with the people of the village and hopes that the rural community can somehow benefit from his education, knowledge and skills.

Another saleswoman I interviewed in the streets of Pantitlán told me that she does not have any contact nor receives any support from her rural community. The money she earns at the market is just enough to nourish herself and her mother, who also came to the city a few years after her migration.

This highlights that the relation to the rural community is also influenced by the economic disposition of the indigenous person or group and vice versa. The economic situation therefore has an effect on the expression of identity. If somebody has to fight for his or her everyday survival and has to be concerned with the supply of resources, this eclipses the conscious maintenance of one's ethnic identity. A better education as well as an improved financial situation on the other hand allows an active examination with indigenous identity as well as its revitalization and maintenance. Another economic as well as cultural issue is the loss of the land property:

> [...] un referente es la identidad de sus padres, por ejemplo del abuelo y del papá, la identidad tiene que ver con que tiene tierra o que tiene casa, y que van a quitar la casa y los problemas son así de este tipo: económicos [...] o tal vez no económico sino también se relacionan con un espacio, con espacio en donde este creció (Interview AMI, 2009).

Related to the loss of land property is also family sustenance especially in the city where indigenous groups do not possess any land:

> Aquí se necesita recursos [...] dinero para ir por todos lados y debes tener trabajo, para poder hacerlo. Igual allí debe tener trabajo pero la siembra para tener maíz, para consumir la pepita, los frijoles, eh calabaza, pues, eh, todo eso y chile. Con eso resuelve su problema de alimentación. Aquí si no tienes dinero, no tienes trabajo, no comes en la ciudad (Interview AMI, 2009).

For indigenous migrants the loss of land property does not only lead to insecurities concerning food, but it is also a cultural loss. Indigenous territories play an important role for the execution of rituals and ceremonies, which therefore cannot be realized in the urban surrounding:

> Aquí en la ciudad no tenemos territorio y podríamos conseguir un lugar aquí como nuestro territorio, pero como... porque aquí hacemos las actividades [...] Para realizar nuestras ceremonias no hay territorio. Y se puede hacer aquí pero no es nuestro territorio. Estas son las diferencias (Interview AMI, 2008).

Beside the territory as a cultural marker, language also plays an important role and can be used consciously as a marker of ethnic identity. It can be instrumentalized in the political discourse but it is also a tool to conserve and preserve indigenous cosmology, traditions and rituals. Language can also be used as a tool of differentiation and plays an important role in the process of external identity perceptions. Even though someone would not call himself/herself indigenous, the accent can always force someone into the position of indigenous as an ascription from outside. For the members of the AMI the preservation of indigenous languages seems to be very important as they also produce radio-spots in their languages:

> Se hacen proyectos por ejemplo para la radio, aquí grabamos spots en lengua indígena y en español (Interview AMI, 2008).

The correlation of factors like family and indigenous networks, economic organization and language do have an effect on the expression of indigenous identities in the process of migration. This also highlights that the transformation of the expression or perception of personal identity can be very diverse. Bringing together these aspects, three different types of identity-expression can be described in the next section.

Forms of identity-expression

Thus we can observe processes of assimilation, hybridization/partial adaptation, and maintenance/revitalization. The mentioned types should illustrate 'pure ideals' as analytical constructs.

Assimilation: As mentioned above, this process is closely linked to the giving up of indigenous networks in the rural as well as in the urban surrounding. Economic,

political and psychosocial problems can lead to the acculturation and incorporation of indigenous migrants into the major-society. The assimilation can take place at an emotional and social level. The consciousness about the own ethnic origin becomes obsolete, but can be activated by external ascriptions. Phenomena like discrimination and racism and the awareness about the marginalization caused by the ethnic origin play a central role in this process. The fear of discrimination can lead to the denial and negation of the indigenous background. This often results in the rejection and loss of the own ethnic identity followed by the subordination to the society of dominance (Hernández García & Hidalgo Ledesma 2003: 39).

More and more young indigenous people living in urban areas find themselves in a dilemma because they are not fully accepted by the urban society whereas the indigenous community cannot offer what they are looking for in their lives (UN Permanent Forum 2007). The intentional distinction from the indigenous population and the conscious production of new forms of belonging e.g. to the wider society can be a result of this process. If there is no reflection about the own individual ethnic identity this also leads to the assimilation, but the indigenous origin again can get obvious through external ascription.

Hybridization/partial adaptation: A process constantly taking place in the encounter of different cultural systems is the adaptation of traditions to the changing conditions and the internalization of certain elements characteristic of the dominant society. This procedure happens either consciously or unconsciously. In the process of intercultural relations, new types of expression for identities emerge. Certain events, objects, emotions, and affections are re-interpreted and get new significances. This also creates new forms of belonging and identification as well as the perpetuation of the aboriginal cultural matrix.

Clothing for example used to serve as a marker of identity. Even though it did not completely lose this function, it increasingly becomes commercialized and can be bought on markets, which makes it accessible for almost everybody. The new significance is more than an ethnic specificity: it also becomes a consumer good.

Indigenous groups also develop new forms of communication as the access to information and communication technology and media is facilitated in the cities. This is not necessarily accompanied with the unlearning of old models. On the contrary, media as well as the Internet can help to distribute and re-vitalize indigenous identity and cultural concepts.

This new possibility to perceive the world also allows developing new forms of acting. Meanings are displaced; new concepts are developed and unfamiliar possibilities of interaction lead to the production and implementation of new institutions, which are

materialized in new artifacts and identities. Examples of such new identical expressions are communication technologies as well:

> [...] a través del internet, porque tenemos una página de internet. Pues, todo eso tratamos de utilizar por eso los indígenas no queremos ser atrás con la tecnología, si (Interview AMI, 2009).

When there is a transformation of leading concepts, with which experiences are interpreted and codified, new discourses lead to a critical examination of rituals and their new contextualization in the changing context (Sieglin 2008b: 31).

Maintenance/Revitalization: In most of the cases the process of hybridization and re-vitalization goes hand in hand and affects different spheres and elements of a particular culture and its expression of identities.

This includes the maintenance of networks, the ethnic consciousness as well as the preservation of the 'cultural matrix' and the renewal of old elements (dances, music, events, language, etc.), their re-evaluation and re-vitalization. In the case of hybridization, old experiences, rituals or meanings are reformulated in the urban context.

The activation of certain cultural elements and ethnic identities can, for example, be inserted intentionally into political discourses to challenge established power structures:

> Y estos procesos de revitalización proceden [...] de fuerzas al interior de las propias comunidades tanto en el ámbito rural urbano, no, que han logrado tener una mayor visibilidad [...] (Interview Castellanos Guerrero, 2009).

Conclusion

The process of indigenous migration and the confrontation with different social identity concepts do not automatically lead to a cultural homogenization as this is often proclaimed. Despite an increasing flow of persons and information there still exist (imagined) boundaries between different groups along ethnic categories, which can be observed in the complex field of social interactions.

All the more it seems important to observe cultural communities embedded in these relationships and to analyze the historically generated frame as well as the effects of these relations. Furthermore we have to reconsider individuals not as objects of uncontrolled transformation, but see indigenous people as subjects and actors in the multidimensional process of inevitable changes. The reformulation and adaptation of particular cultural elements can be controlled and regulated consciously and are accompanied by a reflection of the own ethnic identity. As the maintenance of indigenous identities is not necessarily linked to the territory, preservation and revitalization also take place in the process of urbanization. Nonetheless, the expression of indigenous identities changes due to different factors such as economic changes, marginalization and the loss or maintenance of indigenous networks.

The recognition of change, transformation and the hybrid character of identities should allow an anti-essentialistic reflection of ethnicity. To abrogate the dichotomy of tradition and modernity it is necessary to recognize the potential of the incorporation of traditional and modern ways of life into the Mexican society. As history and examples around the world prove, pluri-ethnic and multicultural societies always bring along a range of problems. The most important question still remains unanswered: how can existing inequalities along ethnic categorization be overcome? Social sciences can help to dismantle and analyze hidden structures of power and inequalities as well as de-essentalize existing categories. It can also contribute to the formulation of approaches concerning a multicultural society together with the collaboration of the civil society but especially through the participation of indigenous groups in the investigation process.

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