



# IBEI RESEARCH SEMINAR

8 May 2015, 2pm  
Room 24.120 – IBEI (1<sup>st</sup> Floor)

**Dr. Matthias vom Hau**  
Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals

## ***'We Existed Before Columbus': Indigenous Movements and Public Goods Provision in Argentina***

Recent decades have witnessed a striking transformation in Latin America. Indigenous people became a formidable political force in their own right, something unthinkable even a generation ago. What are the implications of indigenous mobilization for development and human welfare? In response this paper pursues a subnational comparative analysis of three provinces in Argentina to explore how and when indigenous movements make a difference with respect to their core demands, the implementation of constitutionally guaranteed land rights and the improvement of water provision in indigenous communities. The three neighboring provinces of Tucumán, Salta, and Catamarca are surprisingly similar in their geography, political economy, and their relative levels of human development. Yet, these three provincial states vary dramatically in the implementation of a new national law, which requires all Argentine provinces to survey and document indigenous land claims, a crucial first step in establishing communal land rights. As of October 2014, the land survey is almost complete in Tucumán; in Salta, the survey is far from completed; and in Catamarca, the survey has not even started. Based on this comparison the paper develops an innovative theoretical framework that calls attention to the specific mechanisms by which indigenous movements might influence the institutional competence of states to manage land conflicts and water provision, most prominently naming and shaming, shifts in state-society linkages, and changes in the perceptions of state officials. It also suggests, by drawing on yet also moving beyond the existing political mediation model in social movement studies, that indigenous movements are more likely to affect state capacity if they have the *organizational infrastructure* to sustain collective action, and operate in a political space free of major veto players.

### **Dr. Matthias vom Hau**

Matthias vom Hau is an assistant professor in comparative politics at the IBEI. A sociologist by training, he has a PhD (2007) from Brown University and previously held a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Manchester. His work is centrally concerned with the relationship between identity politics, institutions, and development, with a regional focus on Latin America. Matthias' primary research is on nationalism and ethnic politics. He has published widely on how states construct a sense of national belonging, how civil society actors negotiate and contest official nationalisms, and the extent to which ordinary citizens subscribe to official and counter-state identity projects. A book manuscript on this topic is about to be completed. It represents one of the first efforts to compare nationalism in Latin America, and provides a new theoretical framework that corrects for the relative absence of theories that explain changes of nationalism over time. His most recent line of work brings together ethnic politics and state capacity.

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