

Diploma thesis „Conceptualization of ethnicity in the context of transformation of Sri Lankan conflict“ concerns the protracted social conflict in Sri Lanka in respect of relevant theories and possibilities for a peaceful transformation of the crisis. By means of content analysis I uncover the ontological and epistemological understanding of ethnicity within scholarly discussions of „ethnic conflict“, selected discourses on multiculturalism and the politics of recognition, feminism and postcolonial studies. I attempt to relate and critically evaluate the conceptualizations of ethnicity contained within these discourses in respect of the Sri Lankan conflict and the challenges to its peaceful transformation. I argue that the understanding of ethnicity in the field of „ethnic conflict“ studies, as presented within the limits of this thesis, is derived substantially from knowledge produced in the context of nation, nationalism and the modern nation state conceptual framework. The general theoretisation of ethnicity is therefore confined to the narrow view of a „Westphalian imagination“. Ethnicity is thus passively accepted as a given quality of a de facto homogeneous group, operating within the circumscribed political society defined by the sovereignty of the modern state. However, as I argue, the explanatory power of the Westphalian paradigm proves to be inadequate concerning the patterns of emergence of the Sri Lankan conflict. As well, the paradigm is constraining and ineffective, both in the context of conflict resolution and conflict transformation. In my thesis I attempt to overcome the Westphalian paradigm. Carrying out a theoretical abduction I construct my own model of conceptualization of ethnicity in the context of Sri Lankan situation, a model that perceives ethnicity as a dynamic social category that is continuously reformulated in the course of social interaction. My model should, hopefully, enable all the interested parties to adopt an active approach conducive to stimulating broad public support for Sri Lankan peace initiatives.