



"Knowledge – Cultures – Medialities. Latin America and the Caribbean in a transregional perspective." The 2025–2030 research theme of the Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut (IAI), Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (SPK)

From 2025 to 2030, research activities at the IAI will focus on the research line "Knowledge – Cultures – Medialities. Latin America and the Caribbean in a Transregional Perspective". The research line draws on the institute's collections and the scientific expertise available at the IAI, on its collaborations and networks, and addresses relevant global social challenges. It thus corresponds to the profile of the IAI and its role within the SPK network.

The role of the Ibero-American Institute within the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation

The IAI is an institution of the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (SPK) in Berlin, a world-renowned association of museums, libraries, archives, and research institutions. Founded in 1957, the SPK is distinguished not only by its size but also by its diversity. Its unique, interdisciplinary collections cover a wide geographical area and offer cultural diversity and historical depth. The SPK's special profile lies in its unique way of linking culture and science. Among other things, the SPK is a member of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation, DFG), a founding member of the Berlin Research 50 (BR50) network, and signed the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Scientific Knowledge in 2013. Its appeal to researchers is also evident in its diverse national and international collaborations with universities and non-university research institutions, joint projects and other third-party funding, and its central role in the further development of knowledge infrastructures. In addition to the IAI, the SPK network includes the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, the 21 museums and institutes of the Staatliche Museen Berlin, the Geheime Staatsarchiv, and the Staatliches Institut für Musikforschung. The SPK is funded by the federal government and all sixteen federal states. Accordingly, it performs tasks on behalf of the entire federal government.

Founded in 1930, the IAI has been part of the SPK since 1962. It is a multidisciplinary, non-university institution for the humanities, cultural studies, and social sciences. As an area studies institution, it has a regional focus – Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain, and Portugal – and also takes transregional interconnections into account. This gives it a genuinely international orientation. The equal integration of different areas of work under one roof – collections, research, and events – is what makes the institute so unique. The IAI's library and special collections contain outstanding holdings on the institute's focus regions. The central tasks of the institute are to further develop these multimedia collections, make them accessible and preserve them for the future. Based on its collections, the IAI develops its own research activities, participates in joint projects with universities, hosts international scholars, and implements a multilingual publication program based on the principles of open science. Cultural and scientific events are another central element of the institute's

social outreach mission. The program of events has a cross-disciplinary, multidisciplinary, and multilingual focus and is carried out with a wide range of cooperation partners.

The IAI has excellent networks in science and culture at both the national and international level. Stable cooperation, multilingualism, and the inclusion of diverse cultural perspectives are fundamental components of its work. This profile enables the institute to act as a bridge between different actors, institutions, fields of knowledge, and regions. The IAI is an attractive research location for international visiting scholars, not only because of its extensive and in some cases unique library holdings and special collections, but also because of its diverse networks. At the same time, visiting scholars strengthen the IAI's research profile with their expertise and knowledge. Cultural, political, and diplomatic actors from Latin America and the Caribbean seek dialogue with the IAI because they find expertise under one roof, not only on their own region, but also on its interrelationships with Germany and Europe. The extensive network strengthens the role of the IAI in intercultural dialogue and at the same time contributes to the visibility of Latin America and the Caribbean in politics and the general public in Germany.

The IAI actively contributes its expertise and experience to the SPK network. The institute's cross-disciplinary approach is complemented by networking expertise, internationalization know-how, and management skills that are also of importance to other institutions and the SPK network in general. The IAI embodies in an innovative way what defines the SPK as a whole: the linking of science, culture, research, and knowledge infrastructures. The IAI actively participates in cross-disciplinary processes within the SPK and is involved in the strategic orientation and further development of the network (Strategy SPK 2030). In the field of research, for example, it helped shape the SPK's Open Science Policy, is actively involved in BR50, participates in the 4A Laboratory: Art Histories, Archaeologies, Anthropologies, Aesthetics (4A Lab) fellowship program together with the Max Planck Institute of Art History in Florence, and cooperates with the University of Oxford. The IAI's successful scholarship and fellowship program has become a model for the entire association. The IAI's international collaborations and networks, as well as its consideration of intercultural perspectives in the management of collections, are of great relevance to the entire foundation. For its part, the IAI makes use of the content-related and structural opportunities offered by the SPK network and helps to shape its further development. Content-related cooperation with other institutions in the SPK is therefore very important to the IAI. It is involved in a wide range of collaborations at the Kulturforum and plays a key role in the development of the Dahlem Research Campus.

Regional research at the IAI as a contribution to transatlantic exchange of experience and cross-border co-production of knowledge

The IAI conducts research in the humanities, cultural studies, and social sciences with a focus on Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain, and Portugal, as well as their transregional interconnections. Third-party funded projects, especially joint projects with national and foreign universities and research institutions, visits by guest scholars, international networks, and the institute's academic publication program play an important role in research at the IAI. The diverse, multimedia holdings of the library

and special collections are central to the institute's research profile. Many of the IAI's projects are located at the interface between research and collections, as well as between science and culture. Based on the regional orientation of the collections and their multimedia nature, the IAI contributes to the debates on material and immaterial cultures in terms of content and methodology, also taking into account the effects of digital transformation.

The IAI is a central hub for German-language regional research on Latin America and the Caribbean thanks to its knowledge infrastructure, knowledge production, and diverse networks. The Institute has been represented on the board of the German Latin America Research Association (ADLAF) for more than 20 years; since fall 2024, the director of the IAI has been ADLAF chair. With regard to intra-European research cooperation on Latin America, the IAI has been involved in the Consejo Europeo de Investigaciones Sociales de América Latina (CEISAL) for many years.

The IAI is committed to nationally and internationally networked, cooperative research that addresses socially relevant topics and contributes to linking theory and practice. The research activities of the scientists at the IAI cover a broad spectrum of disciplines. The research is characterized by a strong focus on cooperation, including with academic communities in Germany, within the framework of third-party funded projects, and with international visiting scholars. The joint production of knowledge with researchers from Latin America and the Caribbean, but also from other regions of the world, makes it possible to overcome Eurocentric perspectives, thus "provincializing" Europe and better understanding transregional interconnections. We do not view Latin America and the Caribbean as a "crisis region," but rather as an important space for innovation that offers a wide range of opportunities. Scientific cooperation between Latin America, the Caribbean, and Europe offers a wide range of opportunities for exchanging experiences, co-producing knowledge, and learning from one another. Comparing different perspectives and linking different knowledge practices can make an important contribution to solving common problems. *Latin America Matters*, Latin America is important for Germany and Europe because social experiences and knowledge production from this region provide answers to global social challenges such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, interdependent inequalities, transnational migration, cultural diversity, and plural citizenship. However, the diverse knowledge production from Latin America and the Caribbean is not sufficiently known in Germany and Europe. This is not only due to language barriers, but also to structural inequalities in the international circulation of knowledge. In this context, the IAI, as a bridge-building institution for the humanities, cultural studies, and social sciences, makes an important contribution to bringing research findings from Latin America and the Caribbean into debates in German-speaking countries. The publicly accessible knowledge infrastructures, the institutional publication program, the institute's own research, the network of visiting scholars, and the diverse scientific and cultural events play an important role in this regard. Thanks to its experience in cooperation and translation, the IAI is uniquely positioned to make important contributions to such pluralistic, integrative, and intercultural transatlantic cooperation.

Against this backdrop, the principles and guidelines on open science are important for the IAI, as they aim to further open up science to society, make data, methods, and publications available according to open standards, and thus enable broader and

more equitable access to knowledge. The IAI has its own open science strategy with the action areas of digitization for open science, open science publishing, and research data management. It is significantly involved in the development and implementation of the SPK's open science policy and is actively committed to the application of open science within its national and international committees and networks. Together with cooperation partners, it also carries out internationally oriented third-party funded projects in which open science approaches are tested and compared.

The research line "Knowledge – Cultures – Medialities. Latin America and the Caribbean in a transregional perspective"

From 2025 to 2030, research activities at the IAI will be guided by the research line "Knowledge – Cultures – Medialities. Latin America and the Caribbean in a Transregional Perspective." The IAI deliberately refers to a research line rather than a research focus. This reflects the fact that, in addition to their contributions to the research line, the institute's researchers engage in other academic activities that enable them to make optimal use of their individual expertise and networks.

The IAI pursues three fundamental strategic goals with this research line. First, the focus on a research line strengthens content-related cooperation and interdisciplinary exchange within the institute. Second, the research line bundles the research activities at the IAI. This not only initiates and develops joint research projects, but also lays the foundation for acquiring third-party funding. Third, the research line communicates the institute's diverse research activities to the outside world with a clearly recognizable profile.

The research line "Knowledge – Cultures – Medialities. Latin America and the Caribbean in a Transregional Perspective" builds on the results, contributions, and experiences of the IAI's previous research lines, but sets new accents and develops new questions.

The research program focuses on three areas: 1) "Knowledge Production and Knowledge Circulation," 2) "Cultural Production and Cultural Transfer," and 3) "Controversial Cultural Heritage." These topics correspond to the profile of the IAI and its role within the SPK network. They draw on the institute's collections and existing scientific expertise, on its networks and collaborations, take current scientific debates into account, and address relevant global social challenges.

We use cultures and knowledge in the plural to refer to the diversity and divergence of concepts of culture and knowledge in the field of tension between different disciplines, traditions, and practices. By medialities, we mean practices, contexts, and configurations that take into account both the material and immaterial dimensions of language, image, sound, and music. This also includes intermediality, i.e., the relationships, connections, and breaks between individual media, as well as the simultaneity of different – analog and digital – forms of expression, materialities, and representations.

The three central topics of the research line and the most important questions associated with them are briefly outlined below.

Topic area 1: Knowledge production and knowledge circulation

The IAI is a unique place in this configuration, where knowledge production in and about Latin America and the Caribbean can be found in a variety of media, both analog and digital, not only in the form of books, journals, and newspapers, but also in the form of estates, image documents, sound recordings, institutional archives, maps, graphics, and other collections. Against this backdrop, the Institute considers it essential to critically examine the actors, processes, institutions, and infrastructures that are crucial for the production and circulation of knowledge, as this enables theoretical and methodological reflections to be combined with practical applications. The aim is to analyze, explain, and understand in a more differentiated way the processes of knowledge production and circulation that are shaped by persistent multidimensional inequalities (including differences in income, gender, culture, ethnicity) and transregional interconnections, in order to contribute to their reduction. This also requires a more comprehensive understanding of social debates on the recognition of diversity and difference, as well as the valorization of different forms of knowledge and knowledge practices. In this context, it is very important to consider the opportunities and risks of digital transformation, not only to understand the fundamental transformations in the production, circulation, and appropriation of knowledge, but also to explore whether digital transformation reduces inequalities or rather reinforces them or even creates new ones.

The multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary field of knowledge production and circulation does not focus on a clearly defined subject area. Rather, it brings together different theoretical, methodological, and empirical perspectives.

Key questions in the context of this topic area include:

- a) Which actors, processes, institutions, and infrastructures are instrumental in the production and circulation of knowledge in and about Latin America and the Caribbean? What patterns and strategies can be identified in light of persistent multidimensional inequalities in processes of knowledge production and circulation?
- b) What challenges and barriers do non-Western, indigenous, and African American forms of knowledge and knowledge practices face? Can collaborative formats of knowledge production and open science practices contribute to their visibility, circulation, and reception?
- c) What impact is the digital transformation having on the production and circulation of knowledge in and about Latin America and the Caribbean? What consequences does the increasing penetration of artificial intelligence into scientific practices have for the humanities, cultural studies, and social sciences?

Topic area 2: Cultural production and cultural transfer

This thematic area analyzes cultural production and cultural transfer in Latin America and the Caribbean, taking into account their historical dimensions and transregional interconnections. Different theoretical and methodological approaches in the humanities, cultural studies, and social sciences have developed concepts such as transculturation, *mestizaje*, hybridity, and creolization to explore the specific characteristics, contents, and medialities of Latin American and Caribbean cultural productions. The

analysis of processes of cultural transfer, i.e., the reception, appropriation, translation, and transformation of cultural meanings, practices, and representations, takes into account the social contexts shaped by multidimensional inequalities and differences.

The IAI's multimedia collections enable innovative links between text, sound, and image sources. These unique and interconnected materials are of outstanding importance for research on cultural production and cultural transfer due to their historical depth, geographical breadth, and cultural diversity. The interface between science and culture, as implemented through the IAI's program of events, also provides important impetus in this context.

Key questions in the context of this topic area are:

- a) Who are the key players, intermediary groups, and institutions involved in cultural production and transfer in Latin America and the Caribbean? What role do they play in raising awareness of the region's cultural production in Europe, particularly in Germany?
- b) How do technological, cultural, political, and social changes influence medialities, intermedialities, and forms of representation in Latin America and the Caribbean? What opportunities and challenges does the digital transformation present for cultural production and distribution channels as well as for (trans)regional cultural transfer?
- c) How are cultural production and cultural transfers shaped by asymmetrical configurations? What role does the cultural and linguistic diversity of Latin America and the Caribbean play in this context?

Topic area 3: Controversial cultural heritage

In recent decades, collections and collection institutions such as museums, libraries, and archives have become the starting point for social debates about tangible and intangible cultural heritage. This has revealed the heuristic limitations of static and essentialist concepts of cultural heritage that emerged in the context of nation states, are legitimized by certain types of knowledge, and are organized by the logic of centralized knowledge infrastructures. In contrast, practice-oriented concepts of cultural heritage that emphasize accessibility, participation, and multiple perspectives in dealing with cultural objects and media have gained in importance. They view tangible and intangible cultural heritage from a dialogical and processual perspective. In the context of collections on Latin America and the Caribbean, engaging with indigenous and African American groups has become an important challenge for collection institutions. This is accompanied by processes of recirculation, reappropriation, restitution, and reinterpretation of objects. They create new, transregional networks of relationships, but also reveal legal inconsistencies, as cultural objects may be subject to conflicting legal regimes.

The IAI takes a critical and reflective approach to issues relating to cultural heritage, focusing on the complex relationships between the so-called Global North and the so-called Global South. In doing so, it also takes into account the fact that it is an institution of the SPK, a cultural heritage institution with national responsibilities. The

institute's collections on Latin America and the Caribbean and their complementarity with the holdings of other SPK institutions, in particular the Ethnological Museum, play a key role in this context.

Key questions in the context of this topic area are:

- a) What conceptualizations, social debates, legal frameworks, processes, and practices exist in Europe and Latin America/the Caribbean with regard to cultural heritage? What mutual learning processes are possible between Germany/Europe and Latin America/the Caribbean in dealing with tangible and intangible cultural heritage? What forms of cooperation exist between central knowledge infrastructures on the one hand and fluid, communal knowledge infrastructures of indigenous or African American groups on the other?
- b) What impact is the digital transformation having on the understanding of cultural heritage and the handling of collections? What opportunities and challenges does it bring? Which inequalities are being reduced, increased or created by the digital transformation? What questions arise with regard to data sovereignty?
- c) What strategies are museums, libraries, and archives developing to increase access to their collections, improve participation, and promote processes of recirculation, reappropriation, and restitution of objects?

Implementation of the research line

The IAI will incorporate the main topics of the research line "Knowledge – Cultures – Medialities. Latin America and the Caribbean in a Transregional Perspective" in a variety of ways into its activities and the further development of its areas of work between 2025 and 2030. The acquisition of third-party funding plays a central role in this. In addition, there are further research activities, publications, and lectures, as well as the organization of conferences, symposia, workshops, and exhibitions. The IAI's institutional publication program and visiting scholar program (including IAI scholarships and fellowships) also make important contributions to the topics covered by the research line.

An important format that not only plays a role in linking the IAI's areas of work, networking with national and international research institutions, and promoting academic exchange across disciplinary boundaries, but also provides innovative impetus for the research line is the IAI's research colloquium. It serves to present research projects by visiting scholars and institute staff, as well as to exchange ideas and discuss epistemological and methodological questions.

A multidisciplinary lecture series on the research topic helps to relate different disciplinary perspectives to the three subject areas and link them together. The aim is also to bring more strongly discipline-oriented research into a productive exchange with regional research. Another important aspect of the lecture series is the dialogue between science, society, and politics. We want to show how important knowledge about and the exchange of experiences with Latin America and the Caribbean are for shaping our own present and future in Germany and Europe. The IAI aims to strengthen this link between Latin American and Caribbean studies and German and

European debates through its research line. Annual overviews will illustrate and document the concrete implementation of the research line in detail.