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# Two Hundred<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Humboldt – University, time for new cooperations with old friends

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The Berlin University was founded by the linguist Wilhelm von Humboldt (WvH) in 1810 under a strong influence of the philosopher Fichte and the theologian Schleiermacher. In the following years the University was greatly promoted by the natural Scientist Alexander von Humboldt (AvH) who was basically an interdisciplinary and internationally active observer and collector. The young University acquired and established great collections in the fields of botany, geology, mineralogy, paleontology, zoology etc. that are based on AvHs own expeditions and research activities in South America and Russia, on his promotion of expeditions of other scientists world wide, but – equally important – on his and WvHs great political influence. The collections have been steadily extended and many of them are now unified within the Museum of Natural Science in Berlin, which is the second largest of its kind in Europe. The collections had a strong influence on many zoologists in Europe and in particular on the Charles

Darwin, who established the first consistent concept about “The Origin of Species”.

The international and interdisciplinary perspective of both AvH and WvH and – for his time – exceptional independence of political supervision has established the Berlin University as a paradigm for many other Universities world wide. The highest proficiency level was reached around 1900 before it declined during World War I and during the Nazi Regime, and totally collapsed during World War II. During the DDR time a few branches again reached world standard but a broad international cooperation and the reestablishment of former cooperation has been possible only after reunification of the country. The Time that AvH has spent in South America, and in Ecuador in particular, his excursions including the profit that has been gained from it, should be reconsidered and the connections he established in these lands.

Klaus Angerer of our group is working on a project that traces and critical-

ly analyses the modes of sample collection and exploitation of biological materials (*Biodiversity Prospecting*), which is with the perspective of commercialization an extremely sensitive issue, disregarding in past the interest of the home countries.

Daniela Selesi will consider and analyze factors that determine the efficiency of a sustainable agriculture and the perspective for ancient crops in such context. This will involve special considerations of the ethnic and cultural circumstances as well as the particular climatic and logistic conditions of Ecuador. The aim of the study will be to show the development of land use systems in the context of cacao production. The focus will be on how traditional agricultural systems are modified today by combining existing and new knowl-

edge and how they contribute to a sustainable development of the region. In the Sumaco biosphere reserve, cacao is produced in both forms of land use systems, in monoculture and in the chakra system, which will allow her to compare both systems directly.

Other members of the group will follow up AvHs climatology studies at different altitudinal levels around the volcanos.

We will also briefly discuss current projects of our group at the Humboldt University and discuss the potential for further cooperation with local universities in Quite and in Ecuador in general.