

Space, Mediation and Diversity under the Global Condition

Veranstalter: Collaborative Research Centre (SFB 1199) „Processes of Spatialization under the Global Condition“, University of Leipzig; Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe and Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography and International Research Training Group „Diversity: Mediating Difference in Transcultural Spaces“, University of Trier; Saarland University; Université de Montréal

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How can societies manage and utilize global entanglements and cultural diversity? This is one of the most burning questions today, and it also provides a relevant avenue for research into the transformations of political orders, social systems and cultures in modern history. Two research projects that directly address these issues are the Collaborative Research Centre (Sonderforschungsbereich 1199) „Processes of Spatialization under the Global Condition“ (University of Leipzig, Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe and Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography) and the International Research Training Group „Diversity: Mediating Difference in Transcultural Spaces“ (University of Trier, Saarland University and Université de Montréal). In December 2016 they inaugurated their closer institutional collaboration by co-organizing the workshop „Space, Mediation and Diversity Under the Global Condition“ in Leipzig.

This workshop provided the opportunity for doctoral, postdoctoral and senior researchers of both groups to discuss their current projects on the basis of three perspectives that help to better understand the conditions and effects of global connectedness. These include a focus on the complex spatial organization of globally entangled societies, on the management and interpretation of their cultural diversity, and on the mediating actors and mechanisms that facilitate and

shape these interactions.

The workshop started with an introduction of the IRTG Diversity by LAURENCE MCFALLS (Montreal). As a trans-regional, German-Canadian research group, it addresses the contested fields of diversity, multiculturalism and transnationalism by examining paradigmatic changes and historical transformations in interpreting multicultural realities in North America (Quebec and Canada) and Europe (Germany and France) since the 18th century. McFalls, however, proposed to break with a normative, celebratory concept of diversity that carries the risk of political fragmentation. He instead opted for an approach that takes into account the genealogy of the concept and related practices. STEFFI MARUNG (Leipzig) introduced the SFB's research focus that considers modern globalization not just as an increasing dissolution of borders, but as a plurality of projects of creating, steering and controlling global connectivity. Consequently, the center analyzes globally influential processes of re-spatialization run by different kinds of actors in or across different world regions. It develops a typology of a variety of spatial formats that have emerged under the global condition and aims at an empirically grounded narrative of the historical change of spatial orders since the late 18th century.

The workshop's panels reflected the common ground for closer research dialogue as well as avenues for further exchanges between the two institutions. The first panel reconsidered processes of spatial reordering and how these influence the development of political orders. MATTHIAS MIDDELL (Leipzig) revisited the French Revolution as a moment of re-spatialization, questioning a longstanding tradition of viewing the hexagon as the theater of the French revolution and, more generally, the nation-state as the classical container of modern history. He analyzed the reorganization of territory and the translation of spatial semantics to social dimensions across the French Empire as well as in the transatlantic cycle of revolutions until the 1820s. He pointed out that the revolution provided the chance to try out new spatial formats and underlined the important role that global interdependencies

played in the realignment of these spatialization processes. NARI SHELEKPAYEV (Montreal) then presented reflections on typologies of capital cities in a long-term perspective. While capital cities are often seen as the symbolic representation of the nation, he argued for a more nuanced view, taking into account different characteristics and functions of capital cities. He suggested a comparative transnational approach, looking at these cities as spaces of continuity between various types of state regimes such as empires and nations. TILL VAN RAHDEN (Montreal) discussed democratic spaces both as architectural structures and as elusive objects. Expanding our view of democracy as not just a system of government but also as a way of life, he examined the aesthetic experiences, forms and styles that come together in democratic spaces. His presentation strongly resonated with current debates on the stabilization and fragility of democratic forms of living together and of resolving conflicts.

The next panel set out to explore the relationship between globalization dynamics and state regulation. The speakers put special emphasis on multi-level practices, showing that the state still plays a significant role, but must be analyzed as part of a complex system of regulations with different logics of flow and control on each of its levels. MEGAN MARUSCHKE (Leipzig) started out with the example of free trade zones. Addressing the widespread assumption of a global diffusion of these zones, she presented her own research which reveals different models and strategies of zones in local contexts. Taking the example of India, she challenged the narrative of these zones marking the decline of the state. By recognizing that free trade zones emerge in individual contexts to manage state territorialization and global flows, they become part of state spatiality under the global condition. Next was MOHAMED BOUKAYEO (Leipzig) who investigated how the reform of the food subsidies system in Egypt after the Arab Spring affected the relationship between the post-revolutionary state and its people. Focusing on Egypt's Smart Card System and the related politics of implementation, he explained that the digitization of the food subsidy system in Egypt is

part of an attempt to depoliticize hunger and poverty. AHMED HAMILA (Montreal) then turned the workshop participants' attention to the relation of migration and homosexuality. He analyzed the emergence of a new category of asylum seekers that is related to sexual orientation and gender identity, taking Belgium as an example. He described how a window of opportunity has been opened for LGBT asylum seekers at the intersection of national law, EU asylum policy and international regulations.

Practices of carrying across, of brokering, translating and connecting are fundamental for a better understanding of complex spatial reordering and cultural diversity. The third panel examined forms of mediation from different disciplinary perspectives and re-evaluated some of the basic conceptual assumptions regarding these processes and their conditions. ELISABETH TUTSCHEK (Montreal) dealt with the issue of translations between languages, a frequent topic in the literature of Quebec and especially of contemporary fictional texts addressing the bilingual city of Montreal. The writing practices she presented do not only cross the borders of language but also of genres and identities. In her own project of translating these texts into German, she is confronted with the question of how to translate multilingual queer texts that are already in translation and that are exploring the untranslatability and indeterminacy of language. In meeting these challenges, she proposed queer forms of translation that put an emphasis on translation as performance. ANTJE DIETZE (Leipzig) discussed cultural mediation and brokerage in a historical perspective, drawing on examples from the literature on transnational and trans-regional interactions such as colonial encounters, imperial circulations and cultural transfers between nation states. She underlined that research concepts have shifted from the discovery of intermediaries between distinct cultures to an understanding that brokers were instrumental in cultural change in the modern world more generally, thereby co-producing local as well as imperial and national cultures and their boundaries. Both presentations shared a view of mediation not as communication between separated entities, but as

both a process of interaction and co-evolution and an analytical tool to critically assess the foundations and mechanisms of cultural exchange and diversity.

The second day of the workshop was dedicated to spatial imaginations as relevant factors for the transformation of spatial orders. The first panel laid special emphasis on overlapping national, imperial and global dynamics in the 19th century. The panel began with GABRIELE PISARZ-RAMIREZ (Leipzig) who analyzed spatial fictions in early 19th-century literature, with a focus on the Southern and Western peripheries of the United States. She argued that beyond canonized patterns of spatial imaginations like American exceptionalism or manifest destiny, a multiplicity of alternative spatial imaginations existed during that time. She investigated these different and conflicting imagined spaces at the intersection of a search for national identity, expansionist interests and global entanglements that was particularly evident in the peripheries. EVA BISCHOFF (Trier) then analyzed imaginations of settler space and time in 1830s Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania). Comparing them with other kinds of diplomatic relationships and treaties between Europeans and Natives at the time, she identified a moment of bifurcation, a change in the spatial order and modes of imperial knowledge circulation that points to the coexistence of connected, yet distinct spatial trajectories of settler colonialism in the anglophone world. In the last presentation of the panel, NINJA STEINBACH-HÜTHER (Leipzig) examined geographical societies as producers of spatial knowledge and important intermediaries in its popularization. She examined the Geographical Society of Marseille in a global perspective, focusing on its self-perception and imagination of Marseille in the world. She argued that the spatial orientation of the society's activities depended on the imagined uniqueness of Marseille and its geographical and strategic position as a port city and „portal to the orient“.

The last panel reflected on the role of utopian and memory spaces in contemporary spatial transformations, presenting methods of mediating between the different temporal strata of spatial and cultural imaginations and

between actual and potential spaces. NIKOLAS SCHALL (Trier) analyzed the World Social Forum 2016 in Montreal as the illustration of a utopian space. Having evolved as a counter event to the World Economic Forum, the World Social Forum sees itself as an alternative space to neoliberal exploitation and aims to be an open space that organizes itself in a non-hierarchical way. Schall suggested using the concept of 'Global Assemblage' to grasp the forum in its social complexity, as this approach helps in breaking down the opposition between local and global, combining heterogeneous elements without annihilating their differences in explaining the reproduction of a social system. He concluded his presentation with the argument that the heterogeneity that shapes the World Social Forum needs to be further analyzed, particularly regarding the power relations that are produced and reproduced and the inherent paradoxes they create. In the workshop's last presentation, LAURENCE MCFALLS (Montreal) turned the focus on memory and recollection. He presented the project „Open Memory Box,“ which is based on home movies shot in the German Democratic Republic. The latter are re-cut and rearranged to construct new associations and stories, revealing a completely new space of film memories. The project thereby explores spaces of memory that are situated between the spaces of archives and dream worlds, public and private, then and now. Both of the presentations again pointed to the power of imagination and of potentiality in dealing with complex spatial arrangements and cultural diversity.

In the concluding discussion, participants agreed that research on the historical trajectories of cultural diversity can be fruitfully linked to a long-term analysis of the emergence and transformation of various spatial formats and their interactions under conditions of global connectedness. The presentations have shown that multicultural realities have their own forms of complex spatialization. Understanding these requires not only to go beyond territorial containers of historical development such as the nation state, but can also profit from using space as an analytical concept more generally. Vice versa, the multiplication of spatial formats and spatial

semantics that can be observed in modern societies is closely interlinked with varying cultural life-worlds, imaginations and interpretations and can be observed more in depth with an explicit emphasis on mediation practices and inquiries into the conditions of mediality. The discussion also suggested that further research would certainly profit from problematizing the term 'space' more explicitly, making sure to differentiate between the metaphorical and literal use of the term and to carve out disciplinary variations in using space-related concepts in future discussions.

This first joint endeavour of the two institutions has enabled a preliminary mapping of the common ground of their research agendas. These reflect the centrality of various kinds of actors – not just political elites – developing strategies of dealing with the global condition that bring about specific forms of cultural diversity and parallel efforts to control and limit it. Furthermore, the presentations and discussions in Leipzig have highlighted the centrality of transnational and trans-regional approaches as well as the need to bring into dialogue historical as well as recent perspectives on the long-term dynamics of cultural diversity and the pluralization of spatial formats.

*Conference overview:

Introduction of the research groups by Laurence MCFALLS, Speaker of the IRTG at the Canadian Centre for German and European Studies, Université de Montréal, and Steffi MARUNG, Senior Researcher in the Central Project of the SFB 1199, University of Leipzig

Matthias MIDDELL (SFB 1199, Leipzig): The French Revolution as a Moment of Re-spatialization

Nari SHELEKPAYEV (IRTG Diversity, Montreal): What is a Capital City? A Reflection on the Elaboration and Typologies of Contemporary Capital Cities, 1850-2000

Till VAN RAHDEN (IRTG Diversity, Montreal): Democratic Spaces

Megan MARUSCHKE (SFB 1199, Leipzig): Zones of Reterritorialization: India's Free Trade Zones, 1947-1980s

Mohamed BOUKAYEO (SFB 1199, Leipzig):

Reforming Food Subsidies, Digitizing State-Society Relations: Egypt's Smart Card System

Ahmed HAMILA (IRTG Diversity, Montreal): Spaces and Power: Migration and Homosexuality

Elisabeth TUTSCHEK (IRTG Diversity, Montreal): Multilingual (Mental) Spaces and the (Un)Translatability of Heterogeneous Narratives

Antje DIETZE (SFB 1199, Leipzig) : Cultural Mediation and Brokerage

Centre for Area Studies, Thomaskirchhof 20, Leipzig: „Druckfrisch“ Book Launch, in collaboration with the Centre for Area Studies and the European Network in Universal and Global History

Ulf Engel, Heidrun Zinecker, Frank Mattheis, Antje Dietze, Thomas Plötze, eds., *The New Politics of Regionalism. Perspectives from Africa, Latin America and Asia-Pacific* (Routledge 2016)

Moderation: Jon SCHUBERT, Centre for Area Studies, Leipzig

Gabriele PISARZ-RAMIREZ (SFB 1199, Leipzig): Spatial Fictions: Imagining Space in the Southern and Western Peripheries of the 19th-century United States

Eva BISCHOFF (IRTG Diversity, Trier) Looking for an Elm Tree: Imagining Settler Space! Time in 1830s Van Diemen's Land

Ninja STEINBACH-HÜTHER (SFB 1199, Leipzig): Geographic Societies and Spatial Imaginations. The Example of Marseille in a Global Context

Nikolas SCHALL (IRTG Diversity, Trier) The World Social Forum in Montreal as an Illustration of a Utopian Space – Understanding Social Complexity by Using the Concept of a „Global Assemblage“

Laurence MCFALLS (IRTG Diversity, Montreal): Spaces of Memory

Closing discussion on future collaboration

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