

Geographien des Regionalen Geographies of the Regional

The fourth Medium-Term Research Programme of the
Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography

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1 Introduction

The Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography (IfL) conducts fundamental research on the Regional Geography of Germany and Europe and shares its research findings with the wider public. The Institute interprets this broadly defined mission with an implicit call to constantly reflect on the methodological and theoretical fundamentals of its research approaches, and continually develops them further due to their societal relevance. In the fourth Medium-Term Research Programme the Institute on the one hand reacts to the observation that in current public debates, spatial imaginations, semantics, topoi and structures of reasoning play an increasingly important role with still ambivalent objectives. After a phase of opening up until the early years of the 21st century, the nation state, for instance, is now again emphasized more frequently as the dominant form of social organisation. Policies are adopted that aim at its strengthening, if not at its closing-off. As a result, supra-national formations such as the EU are increasingly under pressure to justify themselves. The criticism feeds on the fear of loss of national sovereignty and ‘outside forces’ that, though often remaining vague, are felt to be threatening. Simultaneously, spatial formats such as the nation state are being challenged due to growing global integration and a corresponding fluid change in different scalar references.

The development of spatial thinking and acting is closely connected with spatio-political argumentation patterns and *jeux d’échelles*. On the one hand, ‘space’ appears as a constitutive part of a progress-oriented modernity directed towards networking, universalisation and cosmopolitanism. On the other hand, ‘space’ can just as easily stand for a counter-programme of individualisation, segregation, tradition and inertia. Nonetheless, an interest in establishing order dominates in both cases. The third Medium-Term Research Programme was undertaken essentially under the paradigm of ‘spatial production’. One of the results of combining the various research areas is that, compared to other dimensions of social production (e.g. time/chronology, politics, social reproduction), spatial conditions are used to create and spread generally unambiguous narratives about (social) reality. Thus, in a world that is becoming increasingly convoluted, using familiar terms with spatial connotations such as ‘nation’ or ‘Heimat’, which appear to be clear, serves to reduce insecurity, even if the opposite, the increase of complexity, is possible. Precisely because of their potential to facilitate ordering, descriptions that are spatialising and spatialised become productive. Therefore, they further bring additional spatialising and spatialised decisions, measures and programmes in different areas of society.

2 Strategic Positioning of the IfL: From ‘Regional Geography’ to ‘Geographies of the Regional’

In the past two decades and inspired not least by the *cultural turn* and the globalisation of research, an international analytical perspective that dates back to the 1980s has acquired newly-primed contours particularly regarding theory and methodology. ‘Space’, once understood as an essence per se apparently existing outside society, has become a political, social, economic, cultural etc. product or rather construct that is deeply embedded in social practices and observable from various perspectives. With the third Medium-Term Research Programme, the IfL has reacted specifically to the *spatial turn* that is gathering strength in parts of the social and cultural sciences and the humanities and, through the thematic differentiation of research areas as well as constantly debating theory-based research approaches, has become interdisciplinarily compatible as well as influential for theoretical and methodological developments.

The Institute continues to conduct its research at various scale levels (local, regional, national, supra-national) and, due to the influence of supra-institutional and interdisciplinary collaboration in the past few years, has increasingly orientated its research perspectives towards questions of interconnectedness, spatial dynamisation and thus towards issues of emerging transregional and transnational connections. Inferring from conclusions of the third Research Programme – and in reaction to the social phenomena set out above – the fourth Programme intends to address systematically the problem that Regional Geography has in conveying unequivocalness.

A common challenge in all research areas and for all research groups will be the development of multiple perspectives for the *Geographies of the Regional*, i.e. of a paradigm that not only analyses emerging geographies deliberately from multiple viewpoints but also disseminates knowledge about these new geographies. This will be achieved through theory-based and reflexive continuation, deepening and (re)combining of current methods of research and dissemination. This will continuously be based on the employment of multiscale approaches, the application and further development of comparative methods and methodologies and the creation of complex research perspectives open for interdisciplinary collaboration.

The socio-political aim of the Medium-Term Programme is to strengthen the sense of differences, diversity and interconnectedness of societies in and for a globalised, or rather, globalising world. In these conditions, societies continually produce and reproduce multiple geographies, which is the reason why *Geographies of the Regional* is, above all, faced with the challenge of cultivating interaction with multi-perspectivity in scientific debates and of intelligibly communicating its results to society. Accordingly, the IfL will attempt to form such *Geographies of the Regional* within the framework of basic research and through a deeper engagement in the area of the communication of research results (research into communication methods) to the target groups described in its transfer concept.

3 Structuring of Research

The precise formulation of content and the implementation of the programme will take place in three interlinked research areas (RA) that go back to the founding intention of the IfL, which is to conduct research into the Regional Geographies of Europe and Germany, communicate to the public the insights thus gained – particularly through means of visualisation – and to use the *Archive for Geography* to make the history of the discipline of geography fruitful for reflexive research:

- *Multiple Geographies of Regional and Local Development*
- *Geovisualisations*
- *Historical Geographies*

Two additional research groups (RG) will be set up to develop perspectives on the dynamising elements of the apparently unambiguous and stable Regional Geographies:

- *Geographies of Belonging and Difference*
- *Mobilities and Migration*

The IfL will be setting up these research groups for the duration of its fourth Medium-Term Research Programme to research particular sub-aspects of the multi-perspectivity of Regional Geography specifically and contribute to the three larger research areas. The groups are meant to enhance the intellectual independence and responsibility of the post-docs involved. Their conceptual contributions are to promote the discussions of theories and methods as well as transfer at the IfL. Depending on the development of the groups, they can lead to independent research areas, be integrated into research areas or be terminated.

3.1 Research Area ‘Multiple Geographies of Regional and Local Development’

This research area particularly focuses on the socio-spatial simultaneities of disparate processes, (communicative) complexities of spatial development and the multi-level interconnectedness inherent in the concept of multiple geographies. The key questions are how political, economic and civic stakeholders initiate new developments, which barriers are overcome while doing so and to what extent socio-spatial processes of inclusion and exclusion are produced, reproduced or dissolved in the process.

Based on a dynamic understanding of spatial development, socio-spatial reconfigurations that produce ever new *Geographies of the Regional* are examined. Such new geographies are often elusive and equally characterised by divergent and convergent developments and spatial perspectives. They present our societies with extraordinary challenges that need to be resolved politically, in terms of planning and through participation. The particular expertise of the research area lies in the multi-scalar and multi-dimensional view of

socio-spatially relevant processes from a comparative perspective as well as a focus on governance processes and the role of civil society in phases of societal transition.

The research area continues with research of the third Medium-Term Research Programme on processes of polarisation and peripheralisation and thus strengthens the perspectives of regional and local development. In doing so, the research area wants to contribute to debates on balanced spatial development expressed in the concepts of *spatial justice*, *territorial cohesion* or equal living conditions (gleichwertige Lebensverhältnisse) as well as establish the foundations for a better understanding of the spatial and socio-economic change for different social groups. In such a cross-cutting perspective, dominant scientific discourses (e.g. regarding the importance of metropolitan regions and regions of knowledge, *global cities* or regional clusters) can be examined critically and supplemented with alternative narratives.

Lines of research and research questions

Since the preceding Programme established fundamental knowledge regarding the production of socio-spatial polarisations in particular, the fourth Medium-Term Programme looks at those processes that can be seen as alternative proposals or counter-proposals to socio-spatial polarisations opening up new development options for peripheralised spaces. To this end, three theoretical perspectives are to be interlinked:

1. Research into institutional change (*new/normative institutionalism*, *path shaping*) and into the relationship between space and innovation (*geography of innovation*) including options of a social and solidarity-based economy that is critical of capitalism
2. Research into the importance and organisation of governance processes of regional and local development (*urban and regional governance*) particularly with regard to the influence and practices of civil stakeholders
3. Research into the significance of local and regional reconfiguration processes in the context of nation building/renationalisation, Europeanisation, social liberalisation, globalisation and internationalisation

Presently, it is primarily cities and urban regions that are considered carriers of regional development. Here, new social and economic configurations are spatially reflected with particular visibility. Cities and urban spaces dominate the current discourse about spatial development and thus become projection surfaces for new social self-conceptions and spatial imaginations. This is particularly true of processes in countries that were characterised by Socialism for many decades, including the post-Soviet states. The construction of urban centres is thus to be understood as a macrosocial process that is manifested also outside these centres and suggests a multi-scalar view that overcomes a territorialised understanding of space. Because the regional and the local as reference spaces play an essential role in the social everyday reality, they remain the starting point of our research and permit overarching conclusions about new *Geographies of the Regional*.

Central questions are, e.g.

- What role do spatial references play regarding different scales in social and economic innovation processes in relation to specifically local institutional framework conditions? To what extent are innovation processes hindered or facilitated by structural characteristics? What role does the region play in this as an everyday (and yet multi-scalarly fractured) space of reference?
- To what extent can processes of regional and local change be understood as collaborative processes of state and non-state/semi-state action? What role does civil society play in the governance of urban and regional development?
- In what way and under which conditions do cities and regions and, in particular, peripheralised spaces, position themselves anew in the context of Europeanisation, nation building, internationalisation and globalisation? Which inclusion and exclusion processes are thus caused/(re)produced and how do spatially relevant stakeholders react? Which alternative and radical development options beyond classical market logic are pursued and what counter-processes can be identified?

Development goals

The research area intends to carry out comparative transnational studies at different spatial levels in Germany as well as in Central and Eastern Europe that require stronger international embedding than so far. This includes critical reflection on the spatial relatedness of theoretical constructs and the challenging of their transferability to spatial contexts in Eastern Europe, particularly in the post-Soviet region. To this effect, the existing networks and cooperative relations are to be further internationalised (North America, Western and Southern Europe). Conceptually, the alternative narratives employed in the projects are to be made increasingly fruitful to complement to the meta-narratives that dominate scientific discourse.

Apart from stakeholder-oriented approaches through which state, civic and economic practices as well as urban and regional governance processes are investigated, structural approaches that orientate themselves towards administrative units and contexts of regional and structural development are to be examined further. To this effect, the research area also addresses the development of new empirical approaches in the cross-disciplinary field of qualitative and quantitative methods and with an increasing focus on participatory and reflexive research practices.

Even stronger than in the past, the research area wants to make the established fundamental knowledge more useable and application-oriented, also for stakeholders in public administration (municipalities, districts, regions and ministries). To this end, it will continue to participate in projects involving the transfer of knowledge and in application-oriented projects. Here, a main focus will be the involvement in Central Germany and in Eastern Europe.

In the context of increasingly requested data concerning socio-economic developments in the post-Soviet states, the IfL, together with its local partners, will continue to strive for

the transfer of nuanced information. So far, such information has frequently been extremely hard to access and has been comparable only to a limited extent; however, it is experiencing increasing public interest especially in the context of growing demand for intercultural education and the long-term political, geostrategic and economic orientation of the EU member states. This pertains in particular to the macro regions beyond the eastern external borders of the EU (Black Sea region, South Caucasus, Central Asia, Eastern and North-Eastern Europe).

Potential for collaboration with other research areas and research groups

Concerning general issues of urban and regional development, close connections for research and scientific exchange exist with the works of the *Mobilities and Migration* research group. Overlaps with the *Geographies of Belonging and Difference* research group may result from the use of multi-scalar approaches and in the light of superordinate discourses – particularly in the context of research on socio-spatial polarisations and societal responses.

By focussing on regional and local developments in Eastern Europe and through intensive collaboration with local colleagues, the research area also wants to contribute to a better understanding and an overcoming of different and divisive approaches to multiple *Geographies of the Regional*. This includes the critical reappraisal of the concepts of post-socialism or of the post-Soviet. In the latter, a collaboration with the *Historical Geographies* research area appears to be reasonable. In connection with the investigation of economic and spatio-structural dynamics, a closer collaboration is sought with the *Geovisualisations* research area and with cartography.

3.2 Research Area ‘Geovisualisations’

On the basis of practical mapmaking and spatial visualisations, this research area undertakes primary empirical research for various media and target groups related to their reflexive uses and significance in society. At the same time, it develops and maintains methodologies of geovisual communication as well as the IfL’s research infrastructures. By connecting questions heretofore loosely linked in individual research projects, this research area contributes specifically to the overall goals of the fourth Medium-Term Research Programme through transfer practices as well as basic and applied research:

- It questions the character of atlases and maps as supposedly context-independent spatial representations. The goal of this perspective is a better analysis of these media regarding societal notions and perceptions of space.
- It will adapt both traditional and modern space-related forms of visualisation to contemporary transfer conditions and transfer understanding and, from a critical perspective on its own production practices, (together with the target groups) provide a new perspective on how *Geographies of the Regional* in Europe are described and explained. Projects are envisaged that, more than heretofore, look at

the interaction between users and makers of maps in mapmaking and other visualisations so as to gain information about the kinds of formations and formatting of scientific thinking effected by, or to be accepted as a result of, the visualisation of the results.

- It will increasingly address questions regarding the representation of motion and of qualitative data on maps and other visual media as well as novel forms of visualisation for a multi-perspective approach to regional studies.

Lines of research and research questions

Three lines of research are being pursued:

1. Continuation and consolidation of production practices of atlases and atlas-like products

The production of atlases and atlas-like products is a unique feature of the Institute in the German-speaking area. The research area will develop the existing expertise and transfer further by building on the production of maps and geovisualisations for different transfer formats, e.g. magazines and the online-journal *Nationalatlas aktuell*, that are based in the *Cartography and Visual Communications* department. While the *Cartography and Visual Communications* department is responsible for the permanent safeguarding of technical knowledge, the *Geovisualisations* research area is dedicated especially to the further development of methodological and technical competencies as well as the necessary infrastructure that, in part, will have to be reconstituted so as to connect synergetically the work processes in the double production of print and digital technology. This, for example, includes the generalised geometries for the administrative units of the Federal Republic of Germany that can be used equally for screen and print products. Such geometries will be complemented by methods of semantic generalisation and, for the duration of the fourth Medium-Term Programme, be made available to internal and – for the first time – external research (open access for non-commercial use, especially research and science, according to the transfer concept of the IfL). This implies increased efforts regarding the development of appropriate geovisual forms of representation and atlases for qualitative and uncertain/incomplete data through curation, of narrative strategies as well as of an opening-up of the data and production processes through the incorporation of results from reflexive research. This research area is tasked with designing conceptual solutions for the permanent protection of new research data resulting from work with qualitative and process-based perspectives of cartography.

2. Reflexive research of geovisualisations

Taking a stakeholder-oriented approach, this research area will focus increasingly on the production and utilisation of geovisualisations by the public. Thus, two things will become the focus of attention: firstly, a long-term study of the development and present forming of geovisual production and its utilisation that examines in international, area-based comparisons the extent to which culture-specific factors influence the languages of maps. Secondly, this research area pursues questions regarding the character and influence of maps on processes of dissemination and knowledge generation in new media. Here, the focus of

attention will be on citizen-science initiatives as well as on questions regarding the production of maps by prosumers; a focus that will also take into account the second generation of digital natives as a new and so far insufficiently studied group.

3. Research considering visualisations in *Geographies of the Regional*

The research in this area will be linked to the broader key questions of the Medium-Term Programme into the functional role of ‘visual geographies’ in the *Geographies of the Regional*. To this end, support of the book series *Landschaften in Deutschland* (see below: *Historical Geographies*) develops representations of multi-perspectival aspects of regional geographies, through which we derive principles for research and practical visualisations. The challenge will be the creation of static as well as dynamic and multimedia formats of visualisation that complement classic methods of representation of ‘unambiguous’ regional studies.

Development objectives

For the duration of the fourth Medium-Term Programme, this research area will work towards establishing the IfL as an international centre of competence for atlases by way of an externally-funded concentration of national and international research networks. To this end, it will expand relevant knowledge structures and further develop the location of Leipzig as the network hub. Together with international partners, this research area will identify future-oriented topics for atlases within the framework of basic research and initiate and accompany practice-based (international) applied research into every stage of atlas production and usage, from conception to organisation, draft and production to the distribution and usage by different target groups.

Potential for collaboration with other research areas and research groups

Due to its competencies, the research area *Geovisualisations* already acts as a point of contact for all of the IfL’s other research areas and research groups when theory-based, methodical/methodological or fact-based knowledge about geovisualisations is required. It continually supports colleagues in their inquiries and, collaboratively, develops new formats of visualisation in the context of specific research questions. Close points of reference regarding content exist in the history of cartography segment with the *Historical Geographies* research area. The same applies to joint research projects with the *Mobilities and Migration* research group in the area of visualising mobility. Here, challenges exist in the development of visualisations of spatial movements, e.g. migration movements over time made comprehensible to a wider public, and the systematic further development of underlying data types. Points of reference regarding content exist with the *Multiple Geographies of Regional and Local Development* due to a shared interest in economic and spatial dynamics. Together with the *Geographies of Belonging and Difference* research group, this research area is working on the question of contemporary visualisations of qualitative data.

3.3 Research Area ‘Historical Geographies’

With the fourth Medium-Term Research Programme, the IfL is setting up a research area

under the title *Historical Geographies* that continues approaches of what was formerly “History of Geography” but will also develop new approaches, especially in the methods and methodologies of dissemination segment. Three long-term tasks form the backbone of its activities that are connected with the Department of *Theory, Methodology and History of Regional Geography* as well as organisationally with the *Archive for Geography/Central Library of Geography*. This research area will continue to work with the *Archive for Geography*, with the aim of developing it further as an international centre. This implies the aspiration to act as a national research centre and international point of contact for theories, methods and perspectives of modern geographic subject historiography. An additional task is the editorial supervision of the *Landschaften in Deutschland* [*Landscapes in Germany*] series and to expand it conceptually by using multi-perspectival representations and modernise it with multimedia formats of representation. In order to complete these tasks, this research area maintains a broad portfolio of related expertise: the entire spectrum of archival work on the one hand and historical research practices in a more narrow sense on the other that relate both to the scientific analysis of academic and educational geographies and to historical geographies. Furthermore, this area has extensive experience in the moderation of production processes of regional-geographic descriptions that are the result of continual inter- and transdisciplinary cooperation coordinated by the IfL.

Lines of research and research questions

The three tasks mentioned are to be translated into two interlocking lines of research:

- to develop, using a critical and (self-)reflexive perspective, a new view of history for the “old” Regional Geography with a view to connecting it with the yet-to-be-structured concept of *Geographies of the Regional*. To this end, views of the subject history especially regarding Regional Geographies are to be deconstructed in the context of analyses of scientific history regarding the development of international geography in the 19th and 20th centuries;
- to conceptually build up regional studies anew as a form of *Geographies of the Regional* from a perspective that is dissemination- and transfer-oriented through consistent use of digital media. To this end, methodically-oriented questions about multi-perspectivity, multi-scalarity and reflexivity of specifically targeted transfer approaches are to be developed through consistent use of new media.

The first line of research consolidates and links its own preliminary work regarding the theory and methodology of regional geography as well as the role of visualisation as an instrument of research and dissemination in geography. Here, the research area will change its work on the history of regional geography to international comparisons and, especially, to the question regarding the formation of transnational patterns in the scientific generation of spatial knowledge and its dissemination to various stakeholders (education, administration, politics). The following research questions are central:

- *Establishment of comparability*. The international historiography of the discipline currently seldom works with international comparisons. Therefore, the methodi-

cal and methodological problem to be solved consists of the following core questions: How to produce comparability while preserving a dense empiricism of sources? What is gained by this, how and why; and what is lost sight of, how and why?

- *Analyses of interconnectedness, transnational processes.* There are analyses of transnational processes of exchange and the interconnected history of the subject. However presently, it is not sufficiently clear (due to a lack of archival studies, among other things) to what extent these processes are either steered by personal networks or else by institutions, e.g. the International Geographic Union (IGU). To this end, the research area will dovetail with the extensive people- and institution-related archive holdings of the IfL.
- *Global implementation of spatial formatting processes.* Through this segment the research area asks the basic question concerning the formation of geography-specific spatial semantics in the process of globalisation. Three new research emphases are necessary to this end: (a) an examination of the structuring, implementation and transformation of the observation patterns and research practices of the discipline; (b) studies of the role of visibility and visualisations in geographical research and dissemination; (c) analyses of the resulting and changing modes of the production of space as well as of the function of geographic spatial semantics, especially on fault lines of phases of the de- and reterritorialisation of globalisation.
- *Criticism of theory.* In geography there is a close connection between the historiography of the subject and theory-based communication. What insight is gained if contemporary perspectives of spatial theory are brought into relation with empirical historical findings regarding the development of regional geography?

The second line of research builds on the findings of the first and connects with the current production and network practices as well as the textual and visual narrative practices of the series *Landschaften in Deutschland*. Two aims are pursued here: on the one hand, the views relating to regional studies of the historiography of the subject are to be deconstructed critically so as to gain theory-based perspectives for a contemporary conceptualisation of regional studies in line with the newly-to-be-formed *Geographies of the Regional*. On the other hand – initially based on individual case studies –, it is a matter of developing innovative methods and procedures of media-based dissemination of information about regional studies from basic research to a wide public and local stakeholders. Consequently, for the implementation of the goals of the fourth Medium-Term Research Programme, the following questions are to the fore:

- *Use of novel possibilities of dissemination.* What contents of *Landschaften in Deutschland* are suitable and why and in what curricular and extracurricular contexts for translation into different modes and formats of dissemination, based on digital technology? What is lost in such processes of translation? What will be gained, also regarding transfer activities, of the, yet to be formed, *Geographies of the Regional*?

- *Technology, multi-perspectivity, multi-scalarity, process-orientation.* What requirements exist regarding programming technology? How will they be implemented? What is the potential of the targeted use of new media for the conveyance of multi-perspectival, multi-scalar, process-oriented and application-related dimensions of regional studies knowledge?
- *Model status.* What methods and procedures are to be developed? Under what conditions may they be transferred to volumes of the *Landschaften in Deutschland* series still in progress and stimulate similar transfer activities as examples of best practice?

Development objectives

This research area pursues three development objectives:

- It aims at contributing significantly to the development and expansion of the IfL's transfer- and dissemination-oriented expertise. The research area wants to play an exemplary role in the context of national and international geography, especially in the segment dealing with the transfer of regional-geographical knowledge.
- Secondly, as a result of its historical research into the discipline, it would like to contribute to a new understanding of the role of (Regional) Geography in the process of globalisation. Apart from a greater presence in and through the teaching contexts of geography, it will, in the context of social challenges, keep a special eye on the political potential of the instrumentalisation of spatial semantics. To this end, it will make use of its well-established contacts in East-Central Europe.
- Thirdly, collaborating with colleagues in relevant fields, it is a matter of working towards the regaining of greater importance for historical approaches and methods, especially in German-speaking geography, as these approaches foster a sense of multi-perspectivity, difference and context-dependency as well as processes of the *longue durée* to a high degree. Thus, they are an important building block in the sustainability of a concept of *Geographies of the Regional*.

Potential for collaboration with other research areas and research groups

Due to its expertise, the *Historical Geographies* research area functions as a point of contact for all other research areas and research groups at the IfL when theory-based, methodical/methodological or fact-based knowledge of the history of geography and/or Geographies of History are called for. It continually assists colleagues with their relevant queries as well as in their pursuit of external funding. For many years already, close content-related connecting factors exist – especially in the segment dealing with the history of cartography – with the *Geovisualisations* research area. Here, in the coming years, the collaboration will be strengthened and extended through the joint production of the *Landschaften in Deutschland* series. There are excellent connections with the *Geographies of Belonging and Difference* research group through a focus on theory-related and methodological questions, the continuing reflection on research practices and a shared interest in the

development of new forms of transfer. Especially regarding the necessary expansion of aspects of regional studies relevant to the present and the future, excellent new points of connection to the analyses conducted by the *Multiple Geographies of Regional and Local Development* research area as well as the *Mobilities and Migration* research group will result.

3.4 Research Group ‘Geographies of Belonging and Difference’

A core task of Political and Social Geography is the study of spatial references employed in processes in which social differences and identities are negotiated. The research group perceives an urgent need for new insights, especially considering current tensions in Europe as expressed in the crisis of the European Union, the waning trust in the state as well as the growth of extreme movements. Emotional aspects such as fears and insecurities that are becoming increasingly relevant in such processes demand a further development of research approaches and analyses in this area of geography. At the same time, spatial science itself is undergoing a process of transformation. Characterised by more frequent debates about positionality, research ethics and emotional geographies, the role that geographical research might play in understanding social processes is being renegotiated.

Through targeted analyses of the production and implementation of spatial references in current processes of negotiation of political and social belonging, this research group will support the theory-based and reflexive new development of *Geographies of the Regional* envisaged in the fourth Medium-Term Research Programme. To this end, the group will employ its competencies in the study of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic spatial practices. Based on its methodological, theoretical and epistemological expertise, the group will devote itself especially to the further development of spatial analytical competencies relevant for understanding spatial relations as well as conceptualisations of social learning and the co-production of knowledge.

Lines of research and research questions

In the work on everyday trans-scalar negotiations of belonging and difference in spatial policies and demarcations, the following research question is central:

- How are spatial references currently produced, articulated and applied at different scales in political and social negotiations of difference and belonging in Central and Eastern Europe?

The following questions should be given special consideration:

- How are these spatial references received, negotiated and (co-)produced in an everyday context?
- What imaginary/affective-emotional dimensions characterise these negotiations?

On the basis of these key questions, the research group will concentrate on strengthening

and expanding the following cross-project perspectives over the next few years:

- *Process and performativity.* By directing its attention to the everyday processes of negotiation that are connected with social differentiation and are often conflictual, the group emphasises the temporary, contingent character of belonging. These analyses will include a focus on embodied processes as aspects of spatial negotiations. The research group aims to contribute the resulting insights into the role of performativity to the further development of more-than-representational approaches to geography.
- *Emotionality.* Increasing scholarly attention has been paid in recent years to the significance of affect and emotions in negotiations of difference and belonging. Thus, it is frequently noted that intensified spatial bordering practices are connected to feelings of fear and insecurity. This has led to growing attention in research to emotional aspects. Building on current work in the area of Emotional Geographies, the research group aims to enhance its theoretical and methodological expertise by contributing to the development of approaches that include emotion-alities.
- *Intersectionality.* Social differentiation is frequently enforced on the basis of multiple ascriptions of identity to a single person. Differentiation and discrimination along the lines of, e.g., political residency status, gender and ethnicity are to be considered in their overlapping and mutual effectiveness in the analyses of the group.
- *Trans-scalarity.* The political and social negotiation of difference and belonging takes place on multiple, strongly interlinked and mutually dependent scales. The research group will pursue this interconnectedness across several scales and investigate its particular influence on the effectiveness of spatial references through a trans-scalar approach.

Development goals

In pursuing these questions, the research group aims to contribute to the development of solutions to problems in politics and society as follows: given the increasing social pluralisation and differentiation in sometimes crisis-like conditions in Central and Eastern Europe, one goal of this group is the sensitisation of political and other social stakeholders for spatially-related stereotyping and stigmatisation. In doing so, the concomitant structural disadvantages and social in- and exclusions are to be discussed and scientifically documented. Apart from the scoping of information options for relevant policy areas, it is, on the one hand, a matter of developing translation processes for research results that make it possible to sensitise society in general to connections between space and social inequalities, i.e. through the press and other far-reaching media. To this end, the research group will consider which possibilities exist for utilising existing political-education formats or develop an IfL-specific dissemination tool. Knowledge co-production is further seen as a suitable tool for mediating research results. By collaborating with societal stakeholders in the group's research projects, stable networks are to be created for the joint production,

critical examination and further development of knowledge about the differentiating effects of spatial references in the next eight years. The group will work out a concept for the implementation of transdisciplinary processes in knowledge co-production, knowledge dissemination and application that will contribute to raising the profile of the research group and of the IfL in its entirety in this transfer area.

Building on our research into socio-spatial and politico-geographical negotiations of difference and belonging, the group aims to develop societally relevant proposals for the organisation of inclusive political spaces and for the creation of participation opportunities (*spaces of encounter*). These efforts will be supported by a systematic use of funding opportunities for the transfer and dissemination of foundational research results.

In order to be able to respond to the demands placed on scientific research in light of ever new social problems, the future research programme includes reflexive, yet openly experimental, contributions to the development of methodological approaches and research practices in geography. To this end, the group will pay greater attention to visual and emotional aspects not just in analyses, but also in the dissemination of research findings. Another focus is the further enhancement of development of qualitative analysis methods informed by theoretical debates. The group here focuses on elaborating how the connections between discursive and non-discursive practices can be better understood, aiming to provide new impulses for geographical scholarship that increasingly uses discourse- and practice-theoretical approaches. Work within the group has long included reflection on the practices of geographical research. This will be continued and further focussed upon. Questions of research ethics and positionality will continue to be central to the work of the group in coming years. They will be linked more closely than before to a discussion of research practices in, and relating to, Central and Eastern European contexts.

Potential for collaboration with other research areas and research groups

The expert knowledge that has been acquired in this research group over the past years, particularly on theoretical, methodical/methodological and empirical questions and in the fields of Social and Political Geography, will continue to be developed through internal cooperation: close relations exist with the two research areas of *Historical Geographies* and *Geovisualisations* regarding the analysis of regional and regionalising semantics and forms of knowledge production. Work is underway with the *Geovisualisations* research area to explore the possibilities of further innovation in the development of qualitative spatial research through visualisations of qualitative data. In relation to the *Multiple Geographies of Regional and Local Development* research area, the research perspectives complement each other especially in the area of elaborating tensions and connections between the production of spatial inclusion and exclusion (e.g. stigmatisation) on the one hand, and the handling of their effects and possible political control options on the other. Synergy effects are expected with the *Mobilities and Migration* research group. Thus, both groups need to develop analytical methods for research on multi-scalar power relations in the contested area of migration and belonging, especially regarding the hegemonic regulation of mobility (e.g. through border procedures).

3.5 Research Group ‘Mobilities and Migration’

The conceptualisation of space as a social construct is part of the basic understanding of current geographic research. Its understanding of mobility, however, frequently remains heavily influenced by ‘classical’, often apolitical and technocratic conceptual models oriented towards overcoming space/distance. In order to address this problematic conceptualisation, the *Mobilities and Migration* research group sees its core task in exploring the interdependencies of different modes of mobility and the multi-scalar *Geographies of the Regional*. Following the *new mobilities* paradigm, we draw upon a broad, holistic understanding of mobility. In connection with a decidedly interdisciplinary approach, we critically question theories of mobility so as to contribute to theory development in a novel research field. Apart from residential and circular mobility of people, our holistic concept of mobility includes the mobility of goods, financial flows, knowledge, concepts and practices, imaginations, communication and virtual information. We explicitly include immobility in our thinking, not only as the mere absence of a particular form of mobility but also as an integral part of a mutually dependent mobility system. The group’s research approach is centred on stakeholders and includes motility, i.e. the ability to be mobile. This leads us to questions regarding access to mobility, individual mobility competences and options as well as the embedding of mobility in overarching life plans and biographies. Research into mobility and migration is thus closely connected to questions of difference and interdependence, power and justice, social inclusion and exclusion, cultural expectations and (gendered) practices as well as spatial and social processes of polarisation and marginalisation.

Lines of research and research questions

In the coming six to eight years, we plan to devote particular attention to the conditions, contradictions and interdependencies of different forms of (im-)mobility as well as the multiple connections of (im-)mobility with social and spatial inequality:

- What role does (im-)mobility play in processes of social change? What specific mobility formats may be observed in situations of crisis and transition, and which new *Geographies of the Regional* do they give rise to?
- How are different forms of (im-)mobility linked and mutually intertwined in individual biographies of mobility and which negotiation processes underpin such individual (im-)mobility decisions?

The group understands mobility as a social process, and to understand it properly, both the mobility-enabling conditions, the act of being (im-)mobile itself, as well as the individual and social consequences of decisions about mobility and patterns of mobility must be examined. The research programme concerning *Mobilities and Migration* consequently includes questions about the provision and maintenance of structures and infrastructures that enable and prevent mobility, and pays attention to related negotiation processes. Mobility and migration processes, often caught between individual agency as well as life

plans and an embeddedness in social networks, social institutions and regulatory framework conditions, are examined in a multi-scalar approach. In doing so, we will continue our research into residential mobility and international migration, which has begun during the previous research programme.

A new thematic focus will be on mobility-related regional developments, as well as on negotiation processes of relevant (traffic) infrastructures. The effects of supra-national trends and drivers, such as globalisation, Europeanisation or digitisation of mobility decisions and practices, as well as of migration flows and patterns will also be considered. These multiple perspectives and research questions build on each other in terms of content and theory but are independent empirically, require an openness for different methodical approaches and a reflexive attitude on the part of the researchers. Depending on the particular research question, the group will employ quantitative-statistical and qualitative and ethnographic methods alike. In the case of quantitative analyses, increasing attention will be paid to the analytical and conceptual approach of the social constructiveness of the research object and statistical data bases.

Development goals

The outlined research programme addresses the following overarching goals and research objectives:

- Better integration of migration and mobility research, particularly the interdependencies between different multi-scalar forms of mobility (including the mobility of goods, ideas, concepts etc.)
- Integration of questions about power and justice in mobility research, particularly the selectivity (social/demographic/cultural) of mobility (causes and consequences) and the selectivity of access to and options for mobility
- New perspectives on immobility

Building on research results, the group will develop tailored transfer formats that, in turn, will deliver impulses for follow-up projects, since, indeed, knowledge transfer target groups are frequently simultaneous partners in joint research projects. Policy consultation and the development of application-oriented concepts are among the most important competences of this research group. Numerous contacts already exist with public authorities, committees and administrations at different levels, as well as with stakeholders in the private sector, NGOs and the media.

Thus, the research group works *with* administrative boundaries in the sense of a critical examination of statistical data and the necessity, for example, of developing transfer concepts and products based on administrative units. However, at the same time, a multi-scalar understanding of the Geographies of the Regional requires a concept of transfer products and research projects that allows for an interdisciplinary collaboration that transcends administrative boundaries.

Potential for collaboration with other research areas and research groups

The research topics and key questions of the *Mobilities and Migration* research group are

compatible with the key topics of the *Multiple Geographies of Regional and Local Development* research area, e.g. the question of how different forms of (im-)mobility of people, goods or ideas influence, preclude or enable urban and regional development processes, planning principles and socio-economic innovations. With the *Geographies of Belonging and Difference* research group, we see thematic connections particularly regarding the mutual interaction of state action and mobility options and processes. Both research groups share an interest in the further development of innovative qualitative and quantitative methods. Mutual thematic interests exist with the *Geovisualisations* research area, particularly concerning the visualisation of mobility flows, and a future development of migration and commuter data bases. Finally, there are thematic overlaps with the *Historical Geographies* research area, e.g. in connection with the *Landschaften in Deutschland* series regarding questions of mobility and immobility and their effects on demographic processes.

Addition to the fourth Medium-Term Research Programme, adopted by the Steering Committee on 12.10.2021

3.6 Research Group ‘Data and Practices’

The *Data and Practices* (D&P) research group in the *Cartography and Visual Communications* department comprehensively researches practices of dealing with data that are used to create *Geovisualisations*. The starting point is the remark that in social practice, maps and map-like depictions are understood as carriers of unambiguous information. This communicative position is often supported by the self-image of the discipline of cartography, which usually conceives its visualisations with the claim of representing reality.

The research group takes up a double challenge: on the one hand, it analyses the established ways of dealing with data (for maps) in scientific disciplines in their entire “life cycle”, from the initial extraction or production to the processing and compilation for visualisations, in order to ask how the expectations of unambiguity are deeply embedded in empirical practices and the epistemology of the disciplines. Moreover and beyond, how, from such findings, procedures can be established with which multi-perspectival, non-unambiguous results can be allowed or also consciously produced in the research process. On the other hand, the research group wants to find cartographic and visual design principles in participatory research and development projects that promote the understanding of a non-ambiguous or equivocal interpretation (and application) of maps among different groups of “map laypeople”. In both research directions, questions of constructing and reasoning about or with spatial data and visualisation formats are addressed in different groupings of society. To this end, the research group is currently running three major projects whose concepts and contents will be further developed during the term of MFP4 in communication with other research areas and groups at the IfL.

The project *hin&weg* is run in close cooperation with the *Regional Geography of Europe* department (*Mobilities and Migration* research group). In cooperation with practice partners, an analysis and visualisation application is being developed that makes data on internal migration in cities and urban-rural regions available in a low-threshold manner not only for city administrations but also for civil society, interested citizens and companies. In the sense of participatory approaches and methodological developments, there are close discussion relations to projects of the *Geovisualisations* research group, for example, *biodiversity*.

In *Names Change - Places Too* (coordination: C. Lotz, Herder Institute Marburg), together with historians, the historical/chronological complexity of the databases for historical maps is made visible to researchers through the integration of national and international digital and analogue gazetteers and made manageable for interpretative comparisons.

The content of the *Gazetteer* project will be advanced through a hermeneutic approach and by tapping into more advanced *digital humanities* methods through the NAWA Chair programme project at the University of Warsaw until mid-2024. The project *People, Places, Events: Innovative Research on Geohumanities to Support Interpretation and Elucidation*

combines research perspectives from the discipline of history with visualisation approaches in the human geography tradition. The interpretation and representation methods are supported by data modelling in graph databases, which enable a comparative development of traditional and new forms of geovisualisations.

Potential for further cooperation with other research areas or groups

While there is already very intensive collaboration with the *Geovisualisation* research area and the *Cartography Working Group* in the KVK (*Cartography and Visual Communication*) department, there is further potential for collaboration with IfL research contexts, especially in the development of qualitative visualisations and methodologies for using visualisations in politically and culturally sensitive contexts.

The research group is pursuing similar approaches in intensive cooperation with the *Belonging and Difference (Z&D)* research group in the DFG network project *Qualitative Visualisations*. The complementary competences in the two groups, i.e. their specific perspectives on fuzzy and ambiguous data and their usability in spatial cooperation, competition and conflict situations, are particularly important for the development of IfL consulting competences not only in cooperation with stakeholders but also in multidisciplinary projects (e.g. with political science).

The project *People, Places, Events* will contribute to the understanding of the use of visualisations in sensitive contexts and contested attributions of meaning. This will be significant for future IfL research in all research contexts where, on the one hand, visualisations (especially maps) are used as representations of conflicting parties and, on the other hand, maps could also be used as a means of moderation.