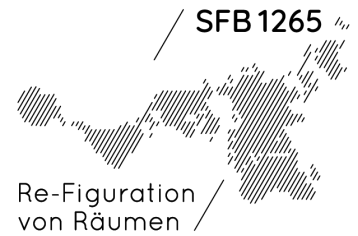


Conflicts in Space – Spatial Conflicts.

Current Research Perspectives



International Conference of the Collaborative Research Centre “Re-Figuration of Space”. Berlin, October 10-11, 2024

Organizers: Prof. Dr. Hubert Knoblauch / Prof. Dr. Barbara Pfetsch

Conference theme

The Conference aims to bring together researchers from different project contexts, disciplines and theoretical brands into contact to reflect on their empirical findings and/or theoretical considerations with regard to the manifestations of conflicts in and about spaces.

We look at conflicts on all scales (from interactions to states) and in diverse spatial areas (city, region) and figurations (territories, networks, places, and trajectories). We want to address the still unresolved question and research gap of whether and how we can understand social conflict as a phenomenon that fundamentally emerges from the spatiality of the social. With respect to this question, we want to draw on the notion of refiguration which challenges the globalization thesis as well as the recently re-emerging notions of de-globalization.

For a long time, the globalization of economics, politics, and information has been seen as an unstoppable development. In recent years, the global geopolitical landscape has witnessed a resurgence of spatial conflicts, particularly centered around issues of borders, nation territories, and sovereignty. The conflict between Russia and Ukraine stands as a stark example of this trend, capturing international attention and raising concerns about the stability of established boundaries. This conflict, rooted in historical, ethnic, and political factors, has reignited debates about the sanctity of national borders, the principles of self-determination, and the potential consequences for regional and global security. These borders are nowadays associated with conflicts, which manifest themselves as conflicts in spaces, but also as conflicts over spaces.

The Conference focuses on the connection between spaces and conflicts in their different constellations and their implications. These conflicts of space reflect the ceaseless interplay between human aspirations and geographical limitations. The emergence of new spatial conflicts not only in Europe but all over the world signifies the ongoing negotiation of power and agency, often converging at the crossroads of culture, politics, and economics etc.

From a social science perspective on space, we want to look particularly at the changes in the last decades which have substituted linear globalization into a conflictual refiguration. From territorial disputes to struggles for cultural preservation, the dynamics of spatial conflict underscore the intricate balance between the tangible and intangible. They encapsulate battles over natural resources, asserting cultural heritage, and carving out virtual territories in the digital realm. The most encompassing challenges include the conflict between authoritarian and liberal scripts, between globalized and de-globalizing economic tendencies, between integration and demarcational cleavages in global social structures and mobilities, or between cosmopolitan and geopolitical strategies.

These and other analyses imply that we need to understand social conflict in space and out of space. Conflicts in space can occur on different scales, such as interactional conflicts between embodied actors; they can also take place on an intermediate level, such as urban conflicts; we also want to address conflicts which occur in a national, international and transnational level, which are epitomized by the recent rise of geopolitical conflicts. By the term of (re)figuration we particularly underline the trans-scalar dimension of most social conflicts, which is massively extended by digital mediatization, public communication and its infrastructures. These conflicts may concern specific systems or globalized spheres, but they also tend to crisscross the functional systems. While stressing the empirical analysis of conflicts in space, the Conference also wants to look for general principles of the spatial dynamics of social conflicts. It is this “spatial logic” underlying conflictual situations which we want to address by the term “spatial conflicts”.

Starting from these assumptions, the Conference aims at contributions which follow different theoretical threads which posit themselves in relation to the thesis of the refiguration of space.

We would like to discuss the relationship between conflicts in space and spatial conflicts in the following six thematic blocks, among others:

1. Violence, War, Terrorism, Femicide
2. Social Conflicts (Class, Gender; Intersectionality)
3. Ecological conflicts
4. Politics and economics
5. Culture, law, language and religion
6. Wandering and Circulation