

Methods-Conference « Relational Spatial Methods »

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CRC 1265 Re-Figuration of Spaces - Technische Universität Berlin

Universität Potsdam

Université Paris Saclay

Organisers: Séverine Marguin, Christian Schmidt-Wellenburg, Hannah Wolf

Space is a central concept for the analysis of both reproduction and change of social phenomena, acknowledging that these processes always involve the refiguration of socio-spatial orders (Löw/Sayman/Schwerer/Wolf 2021). The juxtaposition of territory and place, as modernity's spatial 'idée directrice', has been complemented by spatial figurations such as networks, trajectories, fluid space, amongst others (Löw 2020; Mol/Law 1994). However, there is no consensus on how to analytically scrutinize socio-spatial processes nor which methodologies and methods to apply. This lacuna calls for methodological reflection and development (Baur et al. 2014). The conference will contribute to these methodological discussions by bringing together researchers from different theoretical standpoints applying relational methods in research projects with a spatial dimension in order to discuss their respective potentials.

The focal questions of this conference, pertinent in current socio-spatial debate, are:

- (1) How can we consider geographical and material dimensions of space in quantitative and mixed methods analyses beyond a mere metaphorical use of notions of social space?
- (2) In what way can we go beyond the documentation of the territoriality of space and analytically take into account the spatiality of sociality and social processes?

As organisers of the conference and the summer school « GDA and SNA - relational spatial analysis », we are particularly interested in the discussion of the potentials of geometric data analysis and social network analysis in relation to other spatial methods such as GIS, mapping, or cartography. We see GDA and SNA especially well equipped to give exciting impulses to bridge at least three common methodological gaps. First, both GDA and SNA call for the methodological and practical integration of qualitative and quantitative methods. Second, both methodologies bridge disciplinary boundaries due to their anchoring in a diverse variety of social sciences such as sociology, political science, communication studies, social and human geography, as well as gender and migration studies. Thirdly, both perspectives advocate research designs that reflexively interrelate statistical-mathematical procedures, qualitative-interpretative understanding and visual-spatial representations, allowing for mutual irritation, creative insight and more encompassing analyses.

Baur, N., Hering, L., Raschke, A.L. & Thierbach, C. (2014). Theory and Methods in Spatial Analysis. Towards Integrating Qualitative, Quantitative and Cartographic Approaches in the Social Sciences and Humanities. *Historical Social Research* 39(2), 7-50.

Löw, M. (2020). In welchen Räumen leben wir? Eine raumsoziologisch und kommunikativ konstruktivistische Bestimmung der Raumfiguren Territorialraum, Bahnenraum, Netzwerkraum und Ort. In J. Reichertz (Hrsg.), *Grenzen der Kommunikation – Kommunikation an den Grenzen* (S. 149–164). Velbrück.

Löw, M., Sayman, V., Schwerer, J. & Wolf, H. (Hrsg.) (2021). *Am Ende der Globalisierung. Über die Re-Figuration von Räumen*. Transcript.

Mol, A., & Law, J. (1994). Regions, Networks and Fluids: Anaemia and Social Topology. *Social Studies of Science* 24(4), 641-671.



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