

The Rise and Fall of Spatial Orders: Historical Narratives and Geopolitical Imaginaries

Fourth Annual Conference of the SFB 1199 “Processes of Spatialization under the Global Condition”,
Leipzig University, 30 September to 2 October 2019

Call for papers

Processes of globalization are not characterized by the dissolution of spatial orders, but rather by continuous and profound reorganizations of these orders. Globalization processes are inherently characterized by such processes of respatialization, which become particularly intense in specific times (critical junctures) and places (portals of globalization) where such processes crystalize and become interconnected. Focusing on the complex interplay between imaginations and practices contributing to the definition and implementation of spatial orders, the fourth annual conference of the SFB 1199 addresses different forms of spatial ordering, efforts to stabilize spatial orders, and challenges arising from these.

Firstly, actors come to the fore who either exploit particular resources and knowledge to do so or who become prominent in destabilizing and challenging existing spatial orders. Secondly, the transformation of spatial orders provides a lens through which the longer history of globalization processes can be conceptualized. These orders do not form a totality, but coexist in a plurality. They are buttressed by particular power structures and variable modes of inclusion, exclusion and hierarchization. At the same time, these power structures are continuously under pressure from competing actors, hence their functioning is often considerably contingent.

Historical and present spatial orders prominently include, for example, the imperial Atlantic order of the late 18th century, which gave birth to experiments with modern forms of territoriality; the colonial order of “Berlin’s Africa” at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, which was an effort to incorporate various spatial orders into an overarching imperial one; the Cold War world of the second half of the 20th century, which structured the world under a bipolar umbrella; the multiple regions emerging through regionalisms, including and beyond European integration; or complex economic orders of commodity chains and enclaves forming what has been referred to as “archipelago capitalism”.

What these historical spatial orders have in common is that when a spatial order achieves acceptance or hegemony, it determines how space and spatialization is viewed and practiced. Under conditions of increasing interconnectedness emerging since the 19th century, these spatial orders have also become increasingly entangled and overlapping. At the same time, imaginations of a universal spatial order that suppresses all alternatives have developed in, for example, geopolitical concepts while various types and groups of actors continue to compete to effectively implement such a global spatial order.

The concept of spatial order is particularly productive for an interdisciplinary conversation between geographers, historians, anthropologists, as well as scholars in the field of literature and cultural as well as international studies. It can be applied (a) as a spatial reading of a particular historical order, integrating it into larger global history narratives identifying major periods of transformations of

spatial orders, thereby drawing our attention to questions of contingency, (in)stability and deficiencies of spatial orders, as well as of their stabilization, institutionalization, and effectiveness; (b) as a heuristic tool that helps to identify and reconstruct empirically the practices and processes that make, shape, and change spatial orders.

We are particularly interested in empirical investigations of the places, periods, and arenas of the transformation of spatial orders. Thus, we hope to bring together expertise to develop a historical theory of transformation of spatial orders in critical junctures of globalization. We invite contributions from various disciplines in the social sciences and humanities – including historians, geographers, anthropologists, economists, cultural studies scholars, and political scientists – and different area studies expertise that address one or several of the following topics:

- different forms of spatial ordering and efforts at stabilizing spatial orders, which may include geopolitical projects; knowledge production, for example in cartography, geography, economics, or anthropology; different forms of institutionalizations; the role of infrastructures; or legitimizing political or moral discourses;
- different types of actors mobilizing knowledge and other resources, forming alliances, navigating different scales and orders, competing with each other to implement their proposals for a spatial order, resisting or challenging existing ones and/or introducing new forms of ordering;
- synchronous and diachronous comparisons of spatial orders;
- challenges to spatial orders under the global condition such as the rise and fall of empires; of political, cultural, and/or economic regionalizations; of international organizations and global governance; of transnational networks; or of the nation state and the interstate system;
- effects and costs of spatial orders for different types of actors, for example in relation to colonialism, capitalism, racism, populism, or financialization;
- theoretical and methodological questions of how to conceptualize and investigate spatial orders such as the relation between historical and systematic approaches, of the multiplicity of spatial orders and their relation, of (re)scaling spatial orders, or of actors and agency in the investigation of spatial orders.

The conference will take place from 30 September to 2 October 2019 in Leipzig, Germany. Accepted paper presenters will be offered travel reimbursement. Overnight stay in Leipzig during the conference and meals are paid for as well. There is no conference fee. Submissions should be in English and include a title and a short abstract of the proposed paper of 300–500 words, a short CV, as well as contact details. The submission should be sent to Dr. Steffi Marung (marung@uni-leipzig.de) by **30 May 2019**. The selection of papers will be announced by the end of June and authors are invited to submit draft papers by early September 2019.