

Imaginations and Processes of Spatialization under the Global Condition

Third Annual Conference of the SFB 1199 “Processes of Spatialization under the Global Condition”, Leipzig University, 4 to 6 October 2018

Call for papers

Imaginations are a key dimension of globalization, not only because they reflect processes of globalization and endow them with meaning, but because imaginations become themselves a productive force in processes of spatialization under the global condition. As an abstract notion, globalization seems to stand in contrast to the everyday experiences of space. In order to act globally, people must expand far beyond the limits of their body-space and act on multiple scales. They have to mobilize, construct, connect, or subvert a plurality of spaces. To do so, they imagine geographies and spaces of action, connecting and cross-cutting locations, nations, or institutions. We thus need to move beyond an abstract notion of globalization as the ubiquity of flows, but address “globalizations” in the plural, as a multiplicity of projects of space- and place-making, of which imaginations are a key dimension. In this way, the differentiation of the diversity of flows and the plurality of efforts to control them, to determine their speed and scale, to produce interruptions as well as connections become visible.

Investigating imaginations is a productive approach to understanding processes of space-making as part of such globalizations. The construction of new or alternative spaces, struggles for dominant modes of spatial formatting, spatial ordering and spatial bordering, or the construction of collectives and communities as well as of exclusions and otherness are all expressed – and become observable – through spatial imaginations and the people who produce them. Imaginations are basic dimensions and relevant drivers of spatial constructions, and these activities include also the perception, reflection and imagination of different spaces like e.g. landscapes, environments, sceneries, terrae, or lands. Imaginations on the one hand reflect practices and experiences of re-spatialization, on the other hand they can also be part of efforts to produce and claim spatial formats, by imagining what has not yet become a dominant re-spatialization (and maybe never will be), or by re-invoking spatial formats that have already disappeared.

The third annual conference of the Collaborative Research Centre (SFB) 1199: “Processes of Spatialization under the Global Condition” analyses the role of imagination(s) in making and changing spatial formats and spatial orders under the global condition in both past and present. The conference is part of a larger endeavour of the SFB 1199 at the University of Leipzig to develop a typology of spatial formats as well as a historical narrative about the change of spatial orders under the global condition. Examining different social and historical contexts, the scholars at the SFB first explore the intentions, practices, and imaginations of different groups of actors that lead to the development of spatial formats, such as empires, nation states, enclaves, or commodity chains. Second, they consider how these spatial formats are combined to form complex spatial orders and how this has changed, and continues to change, over time. Third, the scholars investigate the

visualization and imagination of already established as well as of alternative spatial formats and orders. The annual conferences develop the notions of spatial formats and spatial orders as heuristic tools and deploy them for the analysis of concrete historical processes of re-spatialization.

The conference will focus on practices, methods, modes and forms of imaginations which are developed, applied and/ or challenged by actors in different times and places, investigating dynamics in different world regions in comparative and transregional perspectives: How is space produced through the perceptions, reflections, imaginations of actors under the global condition? How are these spatial imaginations driving and legitimating different globalization projects? Which actors are involved in these dynamics, which modes and forms of spatial imaginations emerge, are challenged, or become pluralized?

In the SFB we investigate the emergence of long-lasting and therefore powerful spatial imaginations in the long 19th century, such as the “discovery of the world” by Geographical Societies, literary imaginations of nationality in the Southern and Western peripheries of the United States, or the imagination of what we could call nowadays transnational spaces in urban mass culture across the Atlantic. These spatial imaginations, as other projects in the SFB demonstrate, have been challenged and pluralized during the 20th century in the context of decolonization, internationalization and the rise of new economic actors. This has led to a proliferation of visualizations and imaginations of globalization, e.g. in different cartographic languages as it is investigated at the SFB for North America, China and the Francophone world. The 20th and early 21st century in particular have witnessed transformations of the form and function of spatial imaginations, that could become strategies of disconnecting spaces or denying access – such as the re-imagination of “land” in debates of land-grabbing and financialization of food and agriculture, as a further project at the SFB shows. They could also be “goods” to be circulated and traded – such as in the cultural industries of the 19th and 20th century or by geographical societies. Their commodification is part of processes of re-spatialization as reaction to an ever more connected world.

Imagination plays a role in all sectors of society – not just in culture and the arts. Different notions that are in use – such as geographic imagination or sociological imagination or political imagination – point to the diversity of fields in which the power of imagination has become a topic of research. Imaginations are expressed in language and texts, images or maps, in performance and architecture amongst others, and thus often also have a material dimension. They not only relate to space, but also themselves take up space and become spatialized. They circulate across spaces, or are confined and bound to territories.

Along these lines, we invite scholars to contribute with their own studies to a comparative discussion of spatial imaginations under the global condition and the transformation of their forms and functions since the 19th century. Contributions could be from geography and cartography, cultural and literary studies, history, anthropology, political science, international relations, economics, religious studies, and related disciplines as well as scholars with diverse area studies specializations. We seek to bring these voices together for a better understanding of how spatial imaginations contribute to the creation and subversion of spatial formats and spatial orders under the global condition. Potential papers may

be either theoretical or empirical, or both. Topics could include but are not limited to:

- Theories and concepts of imagination(s) with regard to processes of re-spatialization and processes of globalization;
- Historicity and historicization of spatial imaginations
- Actors and agency of imagination(s), practices of imagining spaces and spatial orders reacting to/ dealing with the global condition
- Modes, forms and media of spatial imaginations under the global condition
- Institutional arrangements, and power structures that result in, or stabilize spatial imaginations under the global condition;
- Conflicts between different (groups of) actors over competing spatial imaginations related to different globalization projects;
- Multiple ways, rhythms and moments in different world regions and in different cultural contexts of relating to, activating, circumventing, or subverting global and transnational spaces as a form of spatial imaginations.

The conference will take place from 4 to 6 October 2018 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 1 May 2018. The selection of papers will be announced by mid-May and authors are invited to submit draft papers by early September 2018.