



# Spring Academy

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## *Call for Applications*

The Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space (IRS) and neuland21 invite doctoral students and early postdoctoral research fellows to submit applications on the topic:

Investigating Space(s):

Current Theoretical and Methodological Approaches

**Transdisciplinarity**

and Social Scientific

Spatial Research

*13–16 May 2024*

# Transdisciplinarity and Social Scientific Spatial Research

*Join us for a stimulating event  
in Berlin and Brandenburg  
from 13 to 16 May 2024*

During the past decades, the idea of transdisciplinarity has gained increasing momentum. Transdisciplinary research is regarded as a collaborative form of knowledge generation and knowledge application for solving societal challenges that integrates perspectives and actors from academia, civil society, government and administration as well as from the economic realms.

Transdisciplinarity comes with high promises. First, promoters express the belief that through the integration of multiple perspectives and practices on the same object of inquiry and by taking on board divergent normative approaches, a more holistic understanding of reality can be achieved. Second, the collaboration of societal actors and researchers is argued to advance problem-oriented and societally relevant research contributing to problem solution. By including the most advanced expert knowledge, affected parties and actors with expert knowledge to implement solutions, transformative qualities are ascribed to transdisciplinary research too.

Despite these promises – or rather because of these promises – transdisciplinary research is accompanied by severe challenges: it is time-consuming as it is an open-ended learning process, it may fail regularly, it is connected to high uncertainties with regards to its impacts and outcomes, and is driven by incentives con-

tradictory to classical academic careers. Spatial sciences seem to exhibit a strong affinity to transdisciplinarity, because investigating spatial structures and processes requires an integration of several disciplinary perspectives by definition. Each city, region, urban district or village can be seen as an outcome of a process in which social, economic, cultural, physical, ecological, political and regulatory forces interact in complex, often historically unique ways. At the same time, spatial development can be a heavily conflictual process as it touches manifold interests and affects a wide spectrum of social groups in different ways. Therefore, the social scientific research of spatial development cannot be conducted in disciplinary silos and transdisciplinary approaches may provide an opportunity for integrating multiple actors and perspectives in shaping and advancing spatial development.

However, disciplinary inclusiveness and a relative openness to participatory research alone might not be sufficient to be well prepared to take advantage of transdisciplinary research and to deal with all the related challenges. Though transdisciplinary requires a firm rooting within the tradition of a scientific discipline, spatial sciences lack strong disciplinary traditions. Instead, spatial scientists are only loosely connected to each other by a shared interest in spatial categories, but in terms of disciplinary foundations, feel stronger connections to different adjacent fields. From the practitioners' point of view, transdisciplinarity might not offer a clear alternative to the classical division of work as long as clearly identifiable outcomes and benefits for their interests are not linked to such uncertain and time-consuming endeavours.

**Against these ambiguous backdrops, the seventh edition of the IRS Spring Academy seeks to address the following topics:**

- state-of-the-art transdisciplinary research practices and methods in spatial sciences
- benefits and pitfalls of transdisciplinary research
- the specificities of transdisciplinary research with a spatial focus
- organisational forms of realising transdisciplinary research
- practical examples of transdisciplinary initiatives
- transdisciplinary research and academic careers

#IRSSprA

# Application

This call for applications addresses doctoral candidates and early postdoctoral researchers from social sciences and humanities with an interest in spatial processes and transformation. Participants will be selected according to their academic qualification as well as the suitability of their current research project to the topic of the IRS Spring Academy 2024.

## Applications must include:

- a motivational letter (1-2 pages),
- your CV, and
- a short description of your current research project, e.g. an abstract of your dissertation incl. name and affiliation of your supervisors.

We can only accept applications in electronic form. Please send your application in one pdf file via email to:

[springacademy@leibniz-irs.de](mailto:springacademy@leibniz-irs.de)

This call for applications closes on  
**10 March 2024**

Selected candidates will be informed at the end of March 2024; enrolment for the IRS Spring Academy will take place until the mid of April 2024.

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# Participation

In order to foster in-depth discussions and reflections as well as extensive opportunities for establishing and consolidating networks among each other and with leading international scholars, a maximum of 25 participants will be admitted to the IRS Spring Academy.

Tuition fees will not be charged. Meals, snacks and drinks during the event are included, as well as one evening reception and one dinner.

Participants are required to organise accommodation and make travel arrangements themselves and to cover these expenses.

Applicants who a) cannot receive any funding from home institutions and for whom b) travel and accommodation costs would prevent participation, may receive a scholarship.

There is a limited budget reserved for participants in need. In case of strong demand, scholarships will be divided between eligible candidates. Scholarships can only be granted to cover travel and accommodation costs. If you wish to apply for a scholarship, please briefly explain your situation and indicate the amount that would make your participation possible.



# Goals and Formats

The overarching goals of the IRS Spring Academy are to enable junior researchers from social sciences and humanities with an interest in spatial processes and transformation to identify relevant research gaps, to encourage them to use a spatial perspective in their analyses and to learn from leading experts in the field about theoretical approaches and innovative methods for empirical work. Participants will have the opportunity to present their projects in paper pitch formats and to access leading experts for one-on-one consultations. We therefore cordially invite doctoral and early postdoctoral researchers to join us for an interesting programme to discuss their own research with internationally leading scholars and their peers. The IRS Spring Academy combines well-tried and proven formats such as lectures and seminars with less common formats such as doing-research workshops, paper pitches, or academic speed networking. It offers various possibilities to exchange ideas, to discuss current concepts and methodological approaches, as well as to getting feedback on one's own research projects from leading scholars in the field.

**Academic Speed Networking** In a series of quick one-on-one meetings, the participants introduce themselves and ask each other questions about their background, research, and expectations of the IRS Spring Academy. This supports getting to know each other quickly and sets starting points for further exchange.

**Paper Pitches** Each participant has five minutes to present his/her essential research questions, the argument and how it is relevant to the topics of the IRS Spring Academy. The pitches are followed by a discussion moderated by a senior researcher.

**Doing-Research Workshop** In these workshops, facilitators give frank accounts of finalised or recent empirical research projects and provide practical and methodological insights regarding research designs and the implementation of studies with a spatial perspective. They demonstrate how to collect and handle data, how to focus on the object of analysis, and how to deal with unexpected outcomes. Participants are encouraged to share challenges in their own research, to reflect upon practical and/or ethical problems while collecting or interpreting data, and to give feedback on each other's research strategies.

**Co-Teaching Seminar** This seminar offers the opportunity for in-depth discussions with the lecturers. Different approaches regarding methods and theories as well as experiences from doing research will be highlighted and discussed.

**Public Keynote Lectures** Renowned international researchers present their current research in a 45-minute lecture which is followed by a comment and a discussion.

**Meet the Editors and Reviewers** Editors and members of editorial boards of journals in the field of spatial sciences discuss criteria for selecting and revising manuscripts. Senior researchers, having acted as reviewers, also share their insights. To this end, participants are given the opportunity to get insights into working processes of reviewing and editing. In the course of this session, they will be able to discuss and reflect upon their own as well as their fellow participants' publication strategies.

**Individual Consultations** In these one-on-one sessions, the participants get the opportunity to discuss issues of their research with and receive advice from one of the keynote speakers or lecturers in a protected space.

## Keynote Speakers

(in alphabetical order)

### Lars Martel Antoine Coenen

Professor in Innovation and Sustainability Transitions – Western Norway University of Applied Sciences

### Isabelle Doucet

Professor of Theory and History of Architecture – Chalmers University of Technology

## Lecturers

(in alphabetical order)

### Markus Egermann

Leibniz Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development

### Wolfgang Haupt

Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space

### Silvia Hennig

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### Oliver Ibert

Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space

### Anna Momburg

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### Madlen Pilz

Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space

### Suntje Schmidt

Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space

# About the



# Spring Academy

The IRS Spring Academy “Investigating Space(s)” is an annual format comparable to a PhD summer school but, as the name suggests, it is taking place in spring. The international and interdisciplinary format provides spots for 25 participants, typically doctoral students but also postdoctoral researchers in the early phase of their careers. The overarching aim of the IRS Spring Academy is to support qualification projects which seek to explore the spatial dimension of societally relevant topics.

*Further information can be found here:*

[leibniz-irs.de/irsspra](https://leibniz-irs.de/irsspra)

In particular we seek to stimulate debates at the intersections of disciplines and seek to promote academics who wish to conduct research with a spatial perspective. The IRS Spring Academy is dedicated to incite conceptual debates around spatial perspectives and to support new methodological approaches that are required to conduct the related empirical investigations. Moreover, the IRS Spring Academy is a brokerage event that supports early career researchers to build up personal networks and to receive qualified feedback from acknowledged seniors. Each IRS Spring Academy takes four intensive days of collaboration, discussion and exchange. The programme combines different formats of academic engagement, ranging from playful interactions, to seminars, excursions and keynotes. It thereby offers plenty of opportunities to debate conceptual issues, to explore methodological challenges as well as to engage in critical, yet constructive and supportive dialogues.



**IRS**

Leibniz-Institut für  
Raumbezogene Sozialforschung