

6 May 2015  
3.00 pm – 5.00 pm  
IRS, Erkner



**Invitation**  
to the 5th IRS International Lecture  
on Society and Space

## A morality tale of two location theorists in Hitler's Germany: Walter Christaller and August Lösch

Trevor Barnes

### Abstract

Hitler's Nazi project was fundamentally geographical, with space, place and landscape pressed into horrific service. Consequently, the Nazis managed, planned, organized and contorted geography, making it conform to and realise their larger ideological ends.

Partly this was achieved by the Nazis drawing on academic labour, in this case the labour of geographers, urban and rural planners, landscape architects, and agronomists. Each of these academic specialties possessed expert knowledge about geography, as well as theories, concepts and practical methods that could be used to meet the purposes of National Socialism. The British historian of Nazi Germany, Michael Burleigh contends that such "scholars ... put their knowledge at the service of the government ... willingly and enthusiastically. There was virtually no resistance."

This presentation will suggest that Burleigh's contention is not quite true. I will argue that there were a range of responses by German academics with geographical expertise that ranged from enthusiastic support to opposition and subversion. As well there were a range of motivations. I make my argument by drawing especially on the lives and works of two contemporaneous German academics with expert geographical knowledge, Walter Christaller (1893-1969) and August Lösch (1906-1945), but who each had a very different relationship with the Nazis. On the surface, Christaller was a Nazi collaborator, and Lösch was a Nazi resistor. Such a judgment is too simple, however. The reality, I suggest, is less starkly black and white than shades of grey.

**Discussant:** Prof. Dr. Elmar Kulke (HU Berlin)

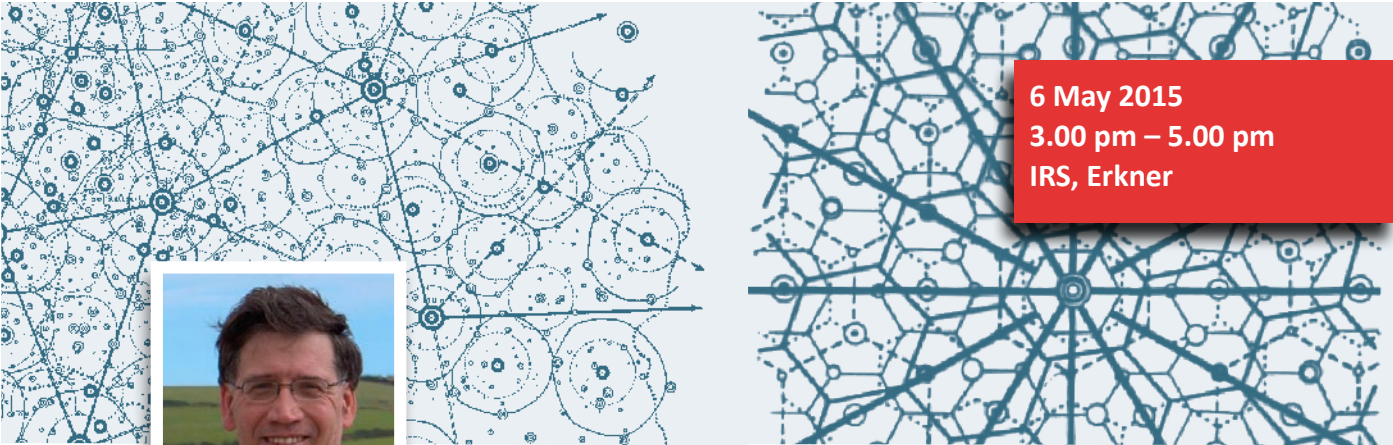


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### **Vita**

Trevor Barnes is Professor and Distinguished University Scholar at the Department of Geography, University of British Columbia, Vancouver. He has published over 150 papers and chapters, and he is the author or editor of a dozen books. His writings have been primarily in the fields of economic geography and the history of geography. He was elected to the Royal Society of Canada in 2011, and was made a Fellow of the British Academy in 2014.

We kindly ask all participants to register [here](#). Thank you very much.



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