



Spring Academy

2025

Spaces of Valuation and Authenticity

Call for Applications

The Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space (IRS) and the Leibniz Centre for Contemporary History (ZZF) – two out of 21 Leibniz institutes involved in the Leibniz Research Alliance Value of the Past – invite doctoral students and early post-doctoral researchers to submit applications on the topic *Spaces of Valuation and Authenticity*.

16–19 June 2025



Spring Academy

*Join us for a stimulating
academic and networking event
in Erkner and Potsdam
from 16 to 19 June 2025*

'Value' is a complex concept: It can be related to appreciation, aesthetics, scarcity, performance or price. However it is defined, value is seen as something desirable and unambiguously positive. Nevertheless, its concrete meaning must be specified in relation to a cultural context in which value is claimed and affirmed. This is very similar to the term 'authenticity'. What is considered authentic has been the subject of debate for years: authenticity is negotiable (Cohen 1988). Yet the term 'authenticity' has assumed a prominent position in the practice of valuation and value creation. In short, authenticity is the promise and hope of trustworthiness, immediacy and originality attributed to the residues of the past and supported by social actors in the present (Sabrow and Saupe 2022). The IRS Spring Academy 2025 discusses the historical dimension in an interdisciplinary debate on the social construction of values and authenticity with spatial reference.

From a social science perspective, it is argued that value is the result of relational work (Moor 2007). Ascribing value to something means that social actors create salient associations between a valued entity (a brand, a commodity, a place or a group) and other carriers of meaning with a positive connotation in the respective cultural context. If such positive associations are established, the argument goes, symbolic meaning can be 'translated' (Aspers and Beckert 2011) and thereby shift between entities. This allows actors to charge entities (e.g., brands) with positive meaning from the web of associations they are embedded in (Pike 2015). In terms of economics, these processes are highly relevant as non-economic forms of symbolic value can translate into high market prices, as is the case in branded commodities, for example. The construction of value thus is more appropriately understood as a dialectical interplay between associations and dissociations (Bair 2019). These associations – but also dissociations – also characterise the

aura of an object's authenticity. Through object- and subject-related attributions, an object conveys a certain image, which in turn is characterised by various actors.

Geographically defined units are increasingly becoming objects of constructions of value and authenticity. The valorisation of (urban) space results from its aesthetic uniqueness, its recognisability and its identity-forming function. It is also closely linked to the presence of material artefacts, architectural quality and aesthetically coherent ensembles. Furthermore, spatial categories are often mobilised (and demobilised) in processes of value creation. For example, local provenance can be useful to assert a certain scarcity or originality (Pike 2015), as is the case in high-end markets for bottled wine (Rainer et al. 2023). Furthermore, being embedded in a region can lead to claims of quality and unique craftsmanship. Finally, value attributions vary between cities, regions and territories. In a global economy, it becomes important to familiarise oneself with spatially diverse cultural settings and identify widely shared values, but also to penetrate different markets with tailored brand strategies (Pike 2015).



#IRSSprA

Cultural meaning is not only geographically diverse, it also changes with the tides of an eventful history. Value is often derived from references to long-lasting institutions, traditions and the heritage from the past as well as disengagement from 'dark chapters of history'. The desire for authenticity can have massive effects on the built environment too, for instance when social actors make decisions about which residuals of the past are worth restoration and which are condemned to decay or approved for demolition.

The IRS Spring Academy 2025 seeks to unpack how claims of historical authenticity are entangled with more general claims of value. Therefore, it brings together geographical and historical views on processes of value creation and looks at their intersection and interaction. The IRS Spring Academy 2025 will treat these topics conceptually, empirically and methodologically. It seeks to develop further a spatial view on processes of value construction across a diverse set of empirical fields, but also to study the attribution of value to spatial entities.

In particular the city of Potsdam will offer rich and diverse inspiration for this agenda as it allows to study key tensions. For example, the tension between spatially differentiated and historically shifting registers of valuation which has been inscribed in the process of post-Socialist urban transformation. The tension between non-monetary notions of originality and trustworthiness and monetary interests can be studied in the urban tourism sector or on the local real estate market. The tension between the desire to allow for immediate experiences of the past on the one hand and agendas of selective restoration that seek to stage a past that serves agendas in the present on the other can be studied by example of prominent urban redevelopment projects. These and other tensions will be studied in field-trips and in dialogue with local stakeholders.

Application

This call for applications addresses doctoral candidates and early post-doctoral researchers from disciplines such as Sociology, History, Geography, Architecture, Spatial and Environmental Planning, Economics, and others. 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 2025.

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

This call for applications closes on

16 February 2025

Applications will be evaluated jointly by the organising team from the IRS and ZZF. Selected candidates will be informed in mid-March 2025; enrolment for the IRS Spring Academy 2025 will take place until the end of March.



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Participation

In order to foster in-depth discussions and reflection as well as extensive opportunities for establishing and consolidating networks, both 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 served for participants in need. In case of strong demand, scholarships will be divided between eligible candidates. Scholarships can only be granted to (partly) 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 goal of the IRS Spring Academy is to enable doctoral students and early post-doctoral researchers from social sciences and humanities and related disciplines 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. The IRS Spring Academy combines well-tried and proven formats such as lectures and seminars with less common formats such as doing-research workshops and paper pitches. 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. A preliminary outline of the programme can be found online.

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 analysis 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)

Patrik Aspers

Professor of Sociology (Chair),
University of St.Gallen

Rebecca Madgin

Professor of Urban Studies,
University of Glasgow

Lecturers

(in alphabetical order)

Christoph Bernhardt

Leibniz Institute for Research on
Society and Space

Stefanie Brünenberg

Leibniz Institute for Research on
Society and Space

Daniel Hadwiger

Editor of the Magazine
Lernen aus der Geschichte

Cecilia Pasquinelli

University of Naples Parthenope

John Pendlebury

Newcastle University

About the



Spring Academy

The IRS Spring Academy is an academic and networking event for doctoral students and early postdoctoral researchers doing spatial research in various fields. The international and interdisciplinary format comparable to a Summer School provides a unique opportunity for 25 junior researchers to share their research and engage with leading scientists and experts. In particular, the IRS Spring Academy shall stimulate debates at the intersections of disciplines and promote academics who wish to conduct research with a spatial perspective. The event is dedicated to incite conceptual debates around spatial perspectives and to support new methodological approaches that are required to conduct 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 and networking, ranging from playful interactions, to seminars, keynotes and excursions. 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. By 2024, 158 junior researchers from 24 countries and 45 speakers and lecturers from ten countries have participated in seven editions of the IRS Spring Academy.

Further information and a preliminary programme can be found here:

leibniz-irs.de/irsspra