



## Call for Papers

### **“Spaces of Social Policies: Achievements and Prospects of Historical Research Perspectives”**

**Conference, Liechtenstein Institute, Gamprin-Bendern, Liechtenstein,  
October 12 – 14, 2023**

The 'spatial turn' has been among the less controversial 'turns' when it has come to proclaiming fundamental realignments of historical analytical perspectives in recent decades. At the same time, the 'turn' has by no means been uniform. It is true that the meanings attributed to it were less diverse among historians than in other disciplines - and between them. However, different fields of historical research were influenced by the postulates associated with the 'spatial turn' in different ways. In some cases, the turn triggered intense debates about concepts and approaches, which were, however, only very gradually taken up by researchers in their empirical work. In other areas, innovation remained limited from the outset, as already existing, viable research perspectives were essentially simply provided with a new theoretical framework. And in still other cases, the turn indeed triggered paradigmatic shifts in the way of looking at the past, asking questions of it and elaborating the corresponding methodological concepts.

Overall, the discussion about the postulated rediscovery of space in history has lost its virulence. Many of the postulates associated with the turnaround are now part of the repertoire of concepts no longer discussed in the discipline. They have arrived, so to speak, in the historiographical mainstream. In this situation, the conference undertakes to look back at what a theoretically and methodologically self-conscious attention to the significance of space has produced in terms of insights. It does this for the field of historical research on social policy.

If one assumes that the central effect of this attention to the significance of space in historical scholarship consisted in questioning the prevailing nation-state framing of research perspectives, it can be stated that particularly in the field of historical social policy research a fundamental tension has persisted. On the one hand, as early as the 1990s, not only conceptual contributions pointed to the importance of cross-border interactions for the formation of institutions and organisations of social policies. Pioneering studies also analysed these inter- and transnational linkages empirically at an early stage. On the other hand, the consideration of social policy has remained prominently anchored in the categories of nation states. This has to do with the fact that - to use a phrase from Abram de Swaan - the welfare state is the national state. While community and other sub-national levels of political action have historically played an extremely important role in the development of socio-political practices, it has primarily been the national level where the decisive institutional conditions - the 'rules of the game' (Douglass C. North) - of social policy have been determined. Consequently, comparison, which early on looked beyond the national margins of social policy, has still defined its units of investigation first and foremost nationally, not least in the service of the formation of models and typologies.



The conference will discuss aspects of the significance of space for historical developments of social policy. A critical review of approaches that have been worked on or proposed programmatically will be combined with the reflection on the continuing or new potentials of established or hitherto hardly considered analytical perspectives. What research has produced in terms of knowledge about the relationship between space and social policy will be assessed. At the same time, attempts will be made to identify persistently worthwhile or so far little-noticed promising approaches for the further development of research in this field. Papers should preferably combine insights from ongoing or recent research with conceptual considerations. Possible aspects that papers can address, but need not be limited to, are:

- orders of spaces: centres and peripheries and the decentering of analytical perspectives;
- scales: municipal, regional, national, supranational, international levels of analysis and their connection;
- transcending the nation state: transnational and global historical approaches;
- ‘in front and behind’: views on urban areas and on the countryside;
- the question of size: the importance of the extension of socio-political entities;
- microhistories: spaces of institutions (workhouses, poor houses, care homes, assisted living facilities, etc.);
- demarcations: territorial borders and social policy;
- causalities: the role of social policy in the constitution of spaces;
- operations: comparison and the study of transfers.

Paper proposals, outlining a contribution of 25 minutes, should not exceed 700 words. The abstract should be accompanied by a brief biographical note of no more than one page detailing the current academic affiliation and past and present research of the applicant. The papers will be delivered in English. The aim is to cover the travel and accommodation expenses of all conference participants. The option of a publication will be discussed at the end of the event.

Please submit abstract and biographical note in one single .pdf-file by e-mail to: [stephan.scheuzger\[at\]liechtenstein-institut.li](mailto:stephan.scheuzger@liechtenstein-institut.li). The deadline for submissions is April 2, 2023. The receipt of proposals will be confirmed. Applicants will be notified about the acceptance of their proposal by April 10.