

Spaces of Valuation a Authenticity (Erkner/Potsdam 16–19 Jun 25)

Erkner and Potsdam, Jun 16–19, 2025

Deadline: Feb 16, 2025

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Call for Applications:

IRS Spring Academy 2025 (Part 8): Spaces of Valuation a Authenticity.

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 for this year's IRS Spring Academy on the topic Spaces of Valuation and Authenticity, taking place in 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 (Reiner 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).

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 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 fieldtrips and in dialogue with local stakeholders.

Read more: <https://leibniz-irs.de/irsspra>

This call for applications addresses doctoral candidates and early post-doctoral researchers from disciplines such as Sociology, History, Geography, Architecture, Art history, 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 by email to: [springacademy\(at\)leibniz-irs.de](mailto:springacademy(at)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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Reference:

ANN: Spaces of Valuation a Authenticity (Erkner/Potsdam 16-19 Jun 25). In: ArtHist.net, Jan 13, 2025 (accessed Apr 5, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/43628>>.